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OF THE
MARIQUITA

Richard Henry Savage

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LORD LYTTON.

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"SIR,—Will you to-day allow me to present you with this Testimonial and Poem on ENO'S justly celebrated 'FRUIT SALT?' My occupation being a very sedentary one, I came here to see what change of air would do for me, and, at the wish of some *personal friends*, I have taken your 'FRUIT SALT,' and the good result therefrom is my reason for addressing you.

"I am, Sir, yours truly, "A LADY.

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Nevada
Comstock
San Francisco

By RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE.

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MISS DEVEREUX OF THE MARIQUITA

A STORY OF

BONANZA DAYS IN NEVADA

BY

RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

AUTHOR OF "MY OFFICIAL WIFE"

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PREFACE.

The State of Nevada enjoys the proud boast, in its recent history, of having unbosomed to the greedy hand of man the most compact mass of treasure ever discovered. Its gray mountain buttresses hide to-day uncounted millions. Its sage-brush plains, its stony wastes, its alkaline lakes, its wind-swept gorges, never invited the thrifty Mormons, who fifty years ago were impelled by that uncrowned monarch, Brigham Young, to deftly seize California. The trifling evidences of gold found in the Carson and the Humboldt were ignored by the Mormon spies, who seized a few fertile oases in this gloomy land of the Piutes. It was a land without a history, until the secret of the mountain gnomes was stolen by Comstock on the flinty breast of Mount Davidson. In 1845, the splendid mind of Brigham Young, dreaming dreams far beyond even the magnificent Aaron Burr, was turned to Mexico, to Arizona, to California, to even the smiling Sandwich Islands, those gems of the blue Pacific. James Marshall, the millwright, of Culloma, called the whole world to the "fierce race for wealth," when he picked up that little nugget at Sutter's mill. He founded by chance the self-evolved empire of the West, and thus foiled the policy of the astute Brigham, who never knew his humble mechanic enemy. California, the golden Star of the West in our ante-bellum days, incited the later explorations of Australia, South Africa, and our own Western territories, for hidden treasure. To this dreary waste of Washoe came Comstock—a second

Marshall—prospecting for gold; Gould, Curry and other humble men were near at hand when the shout went up which called the whole world to "Silverado." Though the State of Nevada is now a dethroned queen, and Colorado wears the silver crown, while Montana and California divide the honors of the golden sceptre, no land in the world ever made history as rapidly as Washoe, and Nevada, from 1858 down to those royal Bonanza days, when the Nevada Silver Barons stormed San Francisco, and building their Pine Street Fortress, made themselves the Bonanza Kings of the world.

In the wild rush of Washoe, the infant Territory was filled with a mass of heterogeneous humanity and "womanity" who wait, in the fading visions of the growing gray gloom of "recent history," for their Bret Harte. California boasts the magician of the Sierras, and Joaquin Miller still wears his crown of the drifted western pine, but Nevada is an unwritten, a songless and a silent land. Its glory has departed, and even the Bonanza Kings have "gone to a land without laughter,"—all save that genial prince of finance, whom his friends hail yet as "John Mackay." Over the old emigrant road, down the Geiger grade, came the Washoe rush of the late fifties; the early sixties saw the wanderers from the East toiling over the plains of the Sioux and Cheyenne, and then creeping timidly under Brigham's rocky battlements at Echo Cañon. Life painted itself luridly in those "flush days" of Virginia City. Adventurer and bravo, sly wanton, and toiling miner, desperado and keen operator, fought, delved, drank, gambled, schemed and struggled for the "unearned increment." Fresh hearts failed, weary hands dropped nerveless by the wayside, plot and intrigue wove their dark web around the entombed treasures, and the Dance of Death was mingled with the fierce, panting life, above and

below ground. When Mount Davidson's millions swamped San Francisco in a golden tide, the pulse that beat in the mountain city throbbed by telegraph down at "The Bay." Mad, wild, Bonanza days! Speculation brought with it strange scenes of dramatic debauchery in the two states. In the early seventies, the golden and silver tide had reached its highest point, and around the Bonanza Kings were gathered all the princes and princesses of the House of Belshazzar. Here, in these pages, one who lived and moved among those scenes as boy and man, has written the story of a mine! The strange history of the inheritance of a friendless girl! The story of an unpunished crime! There are pictures of those Delilah parlors where the mighty men of the Stock Exchange plotted to delude the share-buying public, left stranded when the crash came. Schemes which reached out from San Francisco to Virginia City, New York, London, and Paris, are herein drawn from life, with phases of a wild, Walpurgis night social revel which has now happily passed away forever. The remarkable Southern adventurer who sought to be "one of Nature's noblemen,"—the "Woman in Scarlet," who was Queen of the Night, the great King of Forgers, and the social and mining adventurers of that "time of storm and stress," are real human units who have "strutted their brief hour" upon the scenes of Bonanzadom. The matchless miners of Nevada, brave, bold and resolute, are herein called back from the misty past, and, while to-day, the streets of Virginia City are deserted, and the glory of the past has faded, the romance of the old still lingers! Thrilling and exciting, the story of Miss Devereux of the Mariquita, tells of a modern Una, who walked unharmed among the lions. It is the history of a princess "who came to her own again," after many days. It is vain to search in the world's financial history for a parallel to the

upheaval brought about by the delvers in Mount Davidson's flinty bosom. No such men and women now exist, for the fierce light which played upon the Silver Throne has faded forever, and the story of Miss Devereux of the Mariquita, lifts for a few tableaux the curtain which has fallen for all time, for the play is played out, the actors are all dead or hidden in the gloom of obscurity. The beating of the human heart upon Mount Davidson, the secret life of the Broker Barons, and the intrigues of capitalist and schemer, are painted in the fifteen chapters of this exciting novel, for those who across the vanished years "see these things as in a glass darkly."

BOOK I.

Title by Possession.

CHAPTER I.

In Grizzly Cañon.

"Well, Steve! Back again from the Bay! You do look as if you have had a rough ride! Come in and have a drink!" The speaker had been eagerly waiting for the Carson City stage, on a nipping September evening in the year 1862. The sun had sunk behind grim Mount Davidson, and his last rays glinted back sullenly from the rocky faces of the forbidding gray mountain ranges around Virginia City. The sterile sagebrush hills of Nevada had wrapped themselves in dusky evening robes, and the stars were shining coldly far above in the thin mountain air. The person thus addressed, briskly sprang down from his seat of honor, next to the driver, and peered furtively at the throng of idlers loitering around the stage station. In the evening shadows he seemed to see nothing of special interest, and, as he breathed a sigh of relief, only then Mr. Steve Berard's right hand dropped quietly to his side. It had been resting on the polished mahogany butt of a heavy revolver, whose blue steel barrel bore those cheering words—"Sam'l Colt, Hartford, Conn., U. S. Navy," for "Ready, aye, ready!" was the Berard family motto.

"All right," whispered his companion, in a low voice. "That gang is all down to-night at Gold Hill. Big bear

and bull fight. I've been waiting here for you two hours. Come in!" And Fred Wyman hastily drew the newcomer along through the motley crowd now pouring into the Magnolia saloon. Its open doors and cheery lights were the very warmest signs of welcome at the present moment in the straggling mining town clinging to the scarred breast of Mount Davidson, towering there eight thousand feet above the blue Pacific—a bleak mountain eyrie!

"Snow on the Geiger grade?" queried the off-hand host, as he elbowed Steve Berard up to a quartet of busy barkeepers whose faces were all exemplars of that shining truth, "The Spirit ye have always with you!"—"Plenty and to spare shortly," said Berard, as he contemptuously pushed back the bottle first offered. "Not that—the best in the house!" he cried, as he defiantly threw down a ringing twenty-dollar gold piece on the polished bar slab. Raising his glass, he nodded carelessly to Wyman, and then quickly swept his change into the pocket of his sack coat. With one keen glance at the bystanders, Berard whispered: "Look here, Fred, I've got to have some supper, quick. There's a man putting up at the Golden Eagle whom I played with all the way from 'Frisco to Sacramento. Big merchant! If he is as much of a fool on land as on water, I'll be staked for the whole winter by morning. I can't afford to miss him! I'll get hold of him again at the supper table sure. Such suckers are only caught once in a lifetime."

"But—those assays?" eagerly queried Wyman.

"Tell you all later. Come up to my room at midnight and wait. There he goes now"; and Mr. Steve Berard darted unceremoniously out of a side door as the tired

group, crawling out of the great Concord stage coach in the stable yard, slowly broke up.

With a muttered curse, Fred Wyman saw his companion escape and hasten to join a party now straggling along the narrow street skirting the hillside, where an extra twelve inches on the right leg would have made the northward journey to the hotel far more pleasant. For then, as now, Virginia City's first welcome to the stranger was the uneasy sensation that everything was doomed to slip down two thousand feet below into the resounding cañons of the Carson River.

"Just his cool impudence!" snorted Wyman. "I can't help it now. I will wait for the mail anyway!"

Possessing himself of a choice cigar by the surrender of a half dollar, the young man gazed at the motley arrivals now clustered around the belated stage, and sullenly awaiting the unloading of the great boot filled with their luggage. Whip in hand, the stunted driver, a keen-eyed, cross-looking man of the shortest possible legs and the longest possible oaths, was contemptuously hurling anathemas at the management of the monopoly stage line, and terrorizing the subservient hostlers. "An hour and a half late with these old crabs!" He was an Ætna of sulphurous ejaculation, while the statuesque "shot-gun" messenger stood silent and watchful, with his foot sternly planted on Wells, Fargo and Co.'s iron-bound express box.

"What a rabble!" mused the disgusted Wyman, as he saw the substantial looking merchant disappear in the shadows followed by the stealthy Berard, who was "bold, yet not too bold." For the consequential looking denizen of San Francisco, doomed to be Berard's prey, had just then pompously possessed himself of that one typically

mysterious "lady passenger," whose attire of price and Fatima-like eyes, are always the standing interrogation points of frontier stage travel. An earnestly puffing Hebrew merchant, a stray singing girl, a wild-eyed mining engineer of foreign extraction, two Chinamen and a robust-looking woman cook—"specially imported for the Golden Eagle Hotel"—made up the new arrivals in these "higher circles" of Washoe society, the bouquet finishing with a couple of hard-eyed "sports," who, perched on the roof of the stage, looked every inch the thugs, gamblers and would-be murderers they were at heart.

"This is a nice hole," growled Fred Wyman, as he walked into the huge old stable, roughly built of riven slabs, and then personally inspected the provender of his pet riding mule, before seeking his own repast. "I will have to go down to the cañon after supper. Devereux is always crazy over that woman's letters. I wonder how many men love their wives like that eccentric." There was a faint sneer on Fred Wyman's mobile lip as he strolled up to the bar counter and took a drink "on private account." Though but twenty-four years of age, the tall, flashily handsome young fellow had already solved all the problems of life—to his own satisfaction. A pair of dark, handsome, uneasy eyes gave a shade of distinction to a face whose full lips and softened chin betrayed the pleasure lover. A frontier beard and silken mustache, well set off the rich locks of that abundantly vitalized youth which was Wyman's best capital. Nervous, neat and athletic, his swing and dash spoke of the outdoor habits of the West and Southwest, and withal, a varnish of superior polish lifted him above the rude men now boisterously quarreling over the last news from the front.

For, in these dark days of '62, after the Peninsula, the second Bull Run and Antietam, with the gloomy horrors of Fredericksburg and Murfreesboro waiting in the web of the Fates, no man could tell whether "Jeff" Davis or "Abe" Lincoln would rule from Portland, Maine, to the Straits of Fuca. The stars and stripes and stars and bars were flying on a level. Here on the Comstock, in the far away territory of Nevada, men were only "gold mad," "silver mad," "whisky mad," "card mad," or "woman mad," but not maddened by the roar of battle. They simply assassinated in a cowardly and free and easy manner, callously forgetful of the sleepless vengeance of that Lord who sternly repays all.

Fred Wyman's intelligent brow was unruffled as he gazed with youthful superiority, at the bar-room junta. His eyes never smiling, though his facile lips were rolled apart in an habitual curl, swept along the two or three mean straggling streets of Virginia City, now flashing into light.

There was the regular sequence, saloon, gambling shop, cigar store, etc., in unvarying regularity. Down below, a quarter of a mile, the "Ophir," "Gould and Curry," and one or two other stamp mills were still pounding noisily away. A few cross streets of hovels and cabins sheltered the men not at work in the mines, or lounging in the saloons.

"It's a pretty tough community," mused Wyman. "Not half a dozen home circles here in ten thousand men, all in the flower of life. One third of these fellows hide in the tunnels and shafts, another third in their beds, and the last shift are spending their hard won wages in dance house, gin mill, or gambling saloon. So it goes, with

an occasional job for the coroner, mostly sudden revolver practice." The young pleasure lover's eyes hardened as he turned away from the window. He was wearied of these flinty hills, the bleak gullies, the sagebrush plains, and the dreary wind-swept mountain side. Not a tree nor flower, not a window plant or ribboned curtain spoke of that respectable element of womanhood which was supposed yet to linger, in a dim "survival of the fittest," far over the Sioux haunted plains "in the States," or to be now clinging to the shores of the Pacific slope of the Sierra Nevadas, within sight of the sprouting wooden church steeples of the Yankee. For, already, the old missions were crumbling to ruins, and the black browed men of the serape and lasso were vanishing with the ghostly Padres, who had melted away in the golden days of the Church, into mere hovering shades.

In a vague desire for popularity and an easy self surrender, Fred Wyman swallowed several drinks with chance met companions as he waited for the little one window of the postoffice to open. A line of a hundred and fifty men, whose belted revolvers, heavy boots and flannel shirts were void of the æsthetic decorative element, was awaiting the distribution of the mail.

"Lots of time," lazily soliloquized Wyman, as he declined several pressing invitations to be the fourth man of a poker game, where a player's life went with his hand, and he also gracefully put aside further suggestions of a visit to the faro games, or the dance houses, where the Scarlet Woman, with her fresh evening smile, and deepest décôlleté cut, was "ready to meet all comers."

"By Jove! a respectable woman on the social scene

would draw to heavy houses here. Devereux will never make a miner. I wonder, now, if his wife came up here and opened a good boarding-house, they could not discount the Mariquita. Damn the Mariquita!" he angrily exclaimed, as the hasty exit of his friend came back to gnaw him with its cool disdain. "Steve is a cold-hearted scoundrel, and will he play me fair? Yet, after all, he is the only Southern man I know here." For, as in a corner, a haggard eyed boy was crooning, "I'm gwine back to Dixie, I'm gwine where the orange blossoms grow," it recalled to Mr. Frederick Wyman, an integral, but very active section of his once beloved country, which he had suddenly left, for cause, two years before.

The young adventurer eyed with disdain the cheap adornments of the Magnolia saloon. A flashy bar with cut glass bottles of multi-colored poisons, a huge box stove now roaring with a fire of "fat" pine wood, several prints not hung on the line, but illustrative of the crude artistic development of Virginia City in those halcyon days, were the main features.

"The Southern Beauty"—very, very degagée, and all too amiable, in her abandon. "The great race between the 'Natchez' and the "Planter.'" A realistic print of the "Great International Fight between Messrs. Tom Sayers and John C. Heenan, at Farmborough," and a phenomenally over-canvased clipper ship, entitled "The Flying Cloud." The competitive Babel of maudlin profanity, worn-out obscenity, and vain sectional quarrel was salted with useless conjectures as to the value of the ten thousand "mining locations" now ornamenting the records of Storey county, Nevada. These valuable archives had successively ornamented a butcher shop, a stable office, a blacksmith

shop, and now were conveniently located in a "respectable" saloon. To use the vulgate, "Everybody had a hack at them." And yet, the titles to one thousand millions of hidden bullion were traced in these vicarious leaflets. That golden future for which Frederick Wyman sighed was locked up in a one-quarter ownership of the "Mariquita," to whose high-sounding title the name of Robert Devereux was affixed as "original discoverer." For the lonely man, now waiting for him in his log cabin, a mile and a half from the "center of civilization," in the gloomy Grizzly Cañon, had taken in as a partner the showy youth who was, at least, a companion.

Mr. Frederick Wyman was vaguely supposed to be "educated," a fortuitous circumstance which militated against him in Virginia City. "Stuck up," "Puts on airs," was a dangerous general verdict. A slight affectation of dress, and the remains of some academic training, gained in two years of college life, really lifted Wyman into a dangerous eminence. He had never told the facts of his sudden adieu to Horatius Flaccus and Publius Terentius. A vicious knife thrust in the ribs of a forward Yankee professor at Louisville, suddenly turned the passionate youth westward. Physically drawn toward every luxury, sly, insincere, and at heart callous and dishonest, Mr. Frederick Wyman was in the golden glow of that ripening youth which enchants blind womanhood with the fool's gold of appearance.

He stirred uneasily in his chair as the crowd at the postoffice lessened to a knot, and murmured, "I must watch them both. If it does turn out to be a mine, by God, I'll have it all! I'll find the way." As he walked over the muddy, unpaved way to the postoffice, an ugly thought

came to him. "Berard may go in with Devereux, on the private, and so get rid of me. If I could only get Devereux down to the Bay for the winter, I could work some safe scheme. Yes, I must get rid of him, and divide with Steve. But how?"

In a brown study, Wyman pocketed two bulky letters for his partner, and his face was still clouded as he mounted his big red mule, "Pete," and slowly rode down into the deeper night shadows veiling Grizzly Cañon. "I will have time to think it over before Steve will finish up with his San Francisco greenhorn," mused the excited young adventurer. "Steve dare not hold back the truth from me. He has no title; I have at least possession, and I must separate Devereux and him forever."

In his selfish forgetfulness of the fact that his waiting partner had generously given him the quarter of the mine he legally owned, "for services," Wyman ignored the ownership by Devereux of the greater portion of the "Mariquita." It was now represented by a two hundred foot tunnel, two shafts, and several hundred dollars worth of tools and implements.

The chill night winds sweeping down the "Divide," forced Wyman to bend his head away from the blast. Lost in thought, he was unprepared as his mule suddenly stumbled, and he fell prone upon a soft mound of fresh earth. He had been picking his way along through a little valley, where some wind-blown earth afforded an easy path to the spade of the volunteer burial parties of Virginia City.

As he caught his mule, he stumbled over a rude headboard. Then in the darkness of the growing night there

came to Frederick Wyman thoughts blacker than the shades around him, and yet they were welcome to him. He rode on slowly to where a single glimmering light showed him all the home he could boast of now. "Yes, it is the only way. But how to work it! All depends upon Steve. If I only dared, I would go away myself with some of the stuff," he grumbled, "but I would then leave Steve and Devereux alone here together. I wish to God I had studied for six months metallurgy and assaying, instead of those cursed Greek roots and Latin paradigms. Half knowledge is more maddening than idiocy. I feel in my heart that there is sheeted horn silver and fat sulphide ores in the heavy stuff I have secreted, and yet I do not dare to go near any assayer here. They would give me away."

He rode up to the door of a rough log cabin, whose huge chimney of rough stones was now flaming out like a furnace. A hobbling old Piute Indian, who flourished under the name of "Captain Johnson," the legacy of some neatly scalped army officer, led the mule away. Before Wyman could enter the door, a nervous voice rang out on the night, "Anything for me, Fred?" The man stood near enough to place his hand in friendship on the young man's shoulder, and Wyman started like a guilty shade, as he huskily said, "Yes; two. Here they are. How are you to-night?"

"Just the same; weak enough," was the feeble response of Devereux, as he disappeared into the cabin.

Wyman drew up to a rough table, and, seated on a biscuit box, greedily devoured a meal of bacon, beans and strong coffee innocent of cream. He was glad to be left to the silence of his own black, bitter heart, for the blood

was bounding in his veins under the suspense of his coming excitement. Seated by the fire, Robert Devereux was poring over the folded leaves of two long letters by the light of a tallow dip, stuck in the pine logs with a miner's candle holder. When he had thrust his letters deep into the bosom of his rough flannel jerkin, Devereux drew up to the table and addressed himself to the uninviting viands. His lip trembled with suppressed feeling, and a few draughts of coffee were his sole repast, aided by several attempts at what it were vain flattery to call "the loaf." Captain Johnson, who had by the cohesion of helplessness settled down as their unpaid drudge, had never mastered the bread of the pale face. The salted flour paste, burned on one side, doughy on the other, was, in truth, "big medicine."

"Going up to town to-night?" queried Devereux, as the lithe young fellow stuffed a pipe, and betook himself to striding up and down in the firelight, on the red clay floor.

"Yes, I must see a man," sententiously said Wyman, "and, I won't be back till noon to-morrow. I'll take up your letters. All well down at the Bay?"

"Yes," said the elder man wearily, "but they want me at home."

"Skeptical as to the Mariquita?" queried Wyman, with the half sneer which was the hall-mark of his coarse egoism.

"They are anxious about my long sickness," sadly rejoined Devereux as he drew out writing material from an emptied provision case, which was now an escritoire. While the husband and father wrote in silence, the young man paced the floor like a restless wolf. He hungered

for the hidden tidings known only to Steve Berard who was sitting just then at a table in the "Golden Eagle," where a half dozen fresh packs of cards contained in their glossy surfaces the mystic combinations which held Steve Berard's hoped for "winter stake."

Gray-eyed, bullet-headed, white-haired, with fine womanish, sinewy hands, and a pitiless thin lip, Steve Berard did not have a clear title to his name. For he had left the old patronymic by the side of a murdered Federal paymaster in Missouri, whose governmental "greenback" wallet had furnished forth the fleeing guerilla on his westward journey. "Let these fools fight on here, I am going to skip to California," the ruffian had confided to a fellow disciple of Quantrell, the jayhawker; and in truth, a fine horse, branded U. S., bore the ex-Mississippi River gambler well on his way westward, through the Indian territory.

Seated opposite the pompous commercial magnate from San Francisco, Berard knew that a little "raising of prices" of his goods on the flush companies, would recoup the purse of his doltish victim. For, bad wine and the wintry smiles of the frontier Delilah had already blinded the "soft pork and sour flour" pillar of commerce.

Down in Grizzly Cañon, where the coyotes yelped dismally on the lonely rock knolls, the table at which Devereux was writing, divided the two dissimilar mining partners. The Rembrandt light of the fire threw Wyman's dusky shadow in strange outlines on the floor, as he awaited the preparation of the letters. For Robert Devereux was writing one to the loving wife who had shared his uncertain fortunes, and a few great printed lines to little Hope, the one ewe lamb of the modest line of Devereux. A four months' siege of ague had weakened the man of forty-five,

whose grizzled beard, worn and wasted cheeks, and sunken eyes told of one who was fast failing in "the fierce race for wealth." A thoughtful tender indecision characterized the whole aspect of the man, whose sympathetic face grew almost handsome as thoughts of the absent wife and bairn thronged upon him. The scratching of his pen was the only sound in the cabin, save the shuffling feet of the old Indian in the "lean-to" shed.

As Devereux threw down the pen with a sigh, he gazed curiously at Wyman, still striding up and down.

"What's the matter!" roughly demanded the restless Wyman.

A misty look passed over Devereux's eyes. "As you walked there, your shadow was carved out, as if you were swimming in a sea of blood," slowly said the slender middle-aged man, as he threw himself down on one of two rough bunks, filled with blue and gray blankets. His mind was in a moody and weakened depression.

"Nonsense," energetically shouted Wyman, with a start. "You need twenty more grains of quinine, that's what you want, I'll get it for you. Bring my mule!" he yelled to the old Indian. Grasping the letters lying on the table, he then buckled on his heavy revolver. "Shall I bring you down also a bottle of good whisky?" Wyman turned at the door.

"No, Fred," patiently replied the older, "whisky and I have said good-by forever. There's madness, not health, in the bottle."

"You're a bit too much of a Puritan for Virginia City," rapped out Wyman, as he cried "So-long!" and rode away out into the night. He left behind him, hovering around the despairing lonely man, white-winged visions of

peace and love, called up by the thoughts of his distant wife and child. On his own solitary way there were dark spirits ministering to Wyman's cruel imaginings, spirits whose wings wafted the brooding shadows of death over that lonely cabin, lying below him.

"What in the devil's name put that into his head now?" growled Wyman, as he spurred his mule rapidly up the pass. He was startled into a prophetic anger.

In the half hour before he reached the shaky old stable on C street, around which the night wind howled, Wyman revolved all the occurrences of the last year. The little money he had received from the old Kentucky home, before a fraternal war had cut off all communication, had aided to prosecute the "legal work" needed to hold the "Mariquita."

Devereux, himself a Massachusetts man, of some intelligence and a fine business experience, had sold from time to time a few of his first locations, and all these funds had either gone to the support of his little family at San Francisco, or into the scratchy attempts to open what might be a mine or a mere bald rock gallery.

Hope nerved always the stout miner's arm, and yet, alas! too many of these human burrows were doomed to be merely proofs of the wasted energy of audacious man. Hard as was the flinty breast of Mount Davidson, nothing could daunt the rugged bosoms of the wielders of the pick and drill, who were at least indomitable in pluck and manly marrow.

Frederick Wyman chuckled softly as he realized that the cabin was well stocked for the long winter. There were also funds enough to keep up the legal work till spring. Devereux's sickness had enabled Wyman, for

four months, to hide the evidences of what his covetous heart told him was a very valuable discovery. One shaft he had deliberately caved down with a blast, and had securely covered there, a precious secret hugged to his own heart alone, in an already effected treason to his loyal partner! With his own hands he had also filled up a short cross cut, in the two hundred foot tunnel, where an unknown valuable looking substance had softened the sheeted porphyry of the Comstock. Was it the spur of some great vein? The beads of perspiration stood out on Wyman's brow as he lounged in the Magnolia saloon and impatiently watched the crawling hands of the saloon clock. He knew the viper fangs of Steve Berard too well to dare to break in on the "sheep shearing," at the Golden Eagle. For the polished mahogany butt of that navy revolver already bore several crosses, and the ultimate removal of Steve Berard himself "by violent accident," seemed the only way of avoiding in future an extension of that symbolic list.

Mr. Berard was not over popular on the Carson River, but by the social "specific gravity" of the deadly sport, he moved unharmed in his own circles.

The expansion of this golden circle by new arrivals, its contraction by the extinction of a shining light, now and then, did not affect the "honest working miners" who earned their five dollars a day manfully, and then got drunk peacefully, or squandered their wages, without violence, in the dance halls or gambling saloons. The occasional visits of the sporting fraternity to the useful mercantile circles, were only due to the selection of costly raiment and ornaments, suited to either sex, to the purchase of lethal weapons, or playing cards, and pistol cartridges.

Steven Berard, Esq., and his prototypes, with undeviating regularity, first visited the saloon for the matutinal cocktail and cigars, next the tonsorial artist, then a promenade en grande tenue was followed by a choice déjeuner at some restaurant affected by the cosmopolitan Aspasias of these higher altitudes. The afternoon was devoted to the social duties of exhibiting fast women and faster trotters, or else, secluded "poker practice," led up to the gambler's harvest of the night, when all of Virginia City not "absurdily puritanical" gamboled on the green.

The absence of Robert Devereux from the houses of play, the gin mills, and the dance halls had, at first, marked him as a stingy curmudgeon. But, even the painted Phrynes who watched the careworn miner eagerly awaiting his weekly San Francisco letters, respected the man who passed his days, stooping, hollow chested, over the pick, and toiling manfully for his absent ones.

His lonely cabin life had been gloomy enough until Fred Wyman's coming lightened it. Strange to say, the egoistic borderer had all the careless charm of an easy-going personal nature. In long later years, men, and women, too, were alike to be doomed to always take Fred Wyman for what he was not. His easy pliancy sat lightly on his fine brow and the shifting, glittering eyes were softly pleasing. His voice, of a rich varying timbre, was as wooing as that of the snake charmer, and hardened men often turned and followed the accents of his musical speech. In his lazy disdain of the local clamor following an act of violence—so common at the South—Wyman had never even disowned the good Kentucky name he bore. He was safe enough in the wild West.

Fred Wyman had chafed sorely under his two hoarded

secrets for months. Some subtle fascination of the devilish effectiveness of Steve Berard's wickedness drew the two together. In the tawdry bowers of the Washoe "Ames damnèes," Wyman—ever welcome Gentleman Wyman—heard tales of the subtle viciousness of this cold gambler, a master at all tricks. From a soft-eyed New Orleans quadroon girl, Wyman had learned all of Steve Berard's history. The creamy-faced daughter of the Magnolia land had marked Berard's dark career on the Mississippi river steamboats, where he had used her as a stool-pigeon to entrap the swarthy Louisiana planters and their reckless, bright-eyed sons. "Mass' Steve's a Past Grand Master, shuah. He is the Devil's own," softly cooed the timorous quadroon Venus. "But he's dead game Southern blood, and he will always fight at the drop of a hat!" Such was the admiring yellow girl's verdict. When Fred Wyman had finished some object lessons in poker, and had transferred his own loose change in yellow twenties to Professor Steven, with an easy nonchalance, he said, "See here, Steve, you had better carry my education on a little farther, you may need a man to sit all night with you sometime in a big game. Give me the thirty-third degree."

"By God! you are true blue, youngster," said Berard, and from that time the shadow of white-headed Steve's wing was a protecting ægis to the good-looking young stranger.

In all the wild hurly-burly of life in the mushroom mining camp, Wyman passed in peace through scenes of dangerous excitement. "Friend of Steve's," was the word passed from gambler to gambler, and they forbore to pluck him, as he was vaguely supposed to be a candidate for the

dangerous honors of the profession. A close intimacy followed this secret alliance, and Wyman had often profited by the "third hand" position at poker, where the last man furnished the "soft wool" for the shears.

When the clock marked twelve, Wyman arose and so ended a weary day with a copious libation to Bacchus. As he strode along the streets to the Golden Eagle, he flattered himself at his prescience and cool secrecy. He had, sackful by sackful, secretly carried away a half ton of the hopeful-looking vein matter from the shaft, and also a dozen back loads from the now blocked up cross cut. He had on successive weekly pay days quietly dropped off all the men of their little gang who had worked on either of the two places of suspicious interest. His secret was safe. For stringers, bits, tantalizing bits of the rich gold and silver-bearing ores were also often met with, in all the workings of the Mariquita. Either geologic changes, a fault, a slide, a some forgotten Titan game of the great gods now dead, had caused these incidental finds which on the Comstock brought a wild hope often leaping up into the stoutest hearts.

When Fred Wyman first around a saloon stove exhibited several horny, transparent-looking lumps from one coat pocket, and innocently drew out three or four dark, greasy-looking blue buttery nodules from the other, the circle of phenomenal liars merely laughed. The oldest miner present calmly ordered the drinks for the whole crowd at Wyman's expense. Every man carried ore or croppings in his pocket to the inconvenience of his necessary revolver and bowie knife. For these, and a pack of "fixed" poker cards, were the usual toilet articles of a "gentleman of Washoe," in those days. "See here,

Wyman, you'll get shot by the watchman of the 'dump' if you steal any more of the best 'Ophir' ore," said the veteran prospector as he swallowed a "hot Scotch."

"What do you mean?" Wyman had replied, flushing hotly, for his wild southern blood was not yet toned up to the loaferly familiarity of the frontier bar-room. In that easily expanded circle of loiterers, the last "new-comer" was the general butt until he had paid his "scot," in more ways than one.

"See here, young feller, don't get hot," the miner retorted, for he had half started up at the gleam of Wyman's eyes. "Yer either a fool or a millionaire, if ye didn't steal that from the 'Ophir' dump. This yere cheese-like stuff is horn silver cloride, and will go three thousand dollars to the ton. That sulphury-looking greasy stuff is also good for four to five thousand. Yer a fool not to know it," he laughed, "an' a millionaire if ye've got the mine."

It was Andy Bowen's expert reputation as an old Swansea man, which caused Fred Wyman to join gaily in the general guffaw. He decided to good-humoredly follow the round of drinks with cigars, and then to wander away to muse over the situation with strange biting thoughts gnawing away at his heart.

His father, now a Major-General of the seemingly thriving Southern Confederacy, had in his easy way often in old times descanted of the gilded salons of the old world, the sybaritic delights of Saratoga and Long Branch. Too young for an independent social record, young Wyman had only learned the more or less barbaric vices of Louisville, in his native Kentucky, which were confined to an extravagance in cards, whisky and certain venal

pleasures. His store of classical knowledge sat lightly on him. His more positive accomplishments of matchless horsemanship, good rifle shooting and the usual arts of the border Kentuckian, were comparatively useless now. But, some low streak of antenatal cunning caused him to paint, in his vigorously sensual mind, the delights of wealth, the power of gold, the pleasant future of a man of fair appearance, endowed with an inexhaustible capacity for all the practical vices of young manhood. For neither heart, head, conscience nor nerve had ever failed Fred Wyman where the open doors of pleasure led him on to the delights of that "passing moment still so fair."

He had feared to be slyly followed, if he sought for other samples of his secret ore dump. He avoided all future reference to the supposed valuable specimens. But he eagerly studied up the whole subject, and, thanks to Devereux's sickness, he was enabled to confirm the fair average of the selected deposits.

The whole surface skimming of the great treasure vein had so far only opened its breast a few hundred feet. No one dreamed that men would toil there, in later days, thirty-three hundred feet under the ground; and all the ores now giving revenue were in a transition state from the sublimed gold of the surface, to the chemically combined silver ores of the great "bonanzas." For they were as yet hidden in the mountain's breast, and those heirs of Monte Cristo—the rude Bonanza Barons—were all as poor as Fred Wyman, and infinitely below him in the social scale. Even now, James Shinney and Henry Comstock were already poor outcasts, looking back at the Aladdin's Lamp they had rubbed for a doubting world. For they had sold a nation's ransom in milliards for a mere pittance!

Wyman knew this. "By God! No one shall ever outwit me!" he swore, in his teeth. It never occurred to him to divide his assumed knowledge with his benefactor Devereux. "I must get rid of him someway," he had promptly decided, having no conscience to wrestle with.

A special visit of Steve Berard's to San Francisco enabled Wyman to send down a dozen carefully graded samples of each of the hidden ores for an unprejudiced assay. Wyman had hoarded all his gambling winnings to pay the expenses and so conceal this from Devereux.

His last remark to Berard on leaving was to "Spare no expense!" The romantic story told to Berard of an Indian who knew where there was a mountain of the deposits, never imposed for a single moment on the acute gambler who had cheerfully replied with the optimism of his professor, "Oh! Damn the expense! I'll do the thing on the square."

Mr. Berard was a chosen delegate of "the fraternity" to visit San Francisco, and secretly purvey certain improved "faro" cases, which by the judicious use of concealed springs, enabled the dealer to produce the last three cards in a bewildering variety of arranged sequences. This neat arrangement filled the faro banker's heart with secret joy, his coffers with gold; and also occasioned untold pyrotechnic profanity and financial heartbreak among those who "stood up against the game." A rising vote had allotted Steve Berard a handsome sum for "contingent expenses," and the injunction "to have a good time" had followed him, and had been obeyed by their agent to the letter—to the "Scarlet Letter."

But Steven had not forgotten the assays. Even when he entered his rooms at 2 o'clock A. M., this night, he was

keenly alert as he roused up the sleeping and slightly quarrelsome Wyman. For the potent Spiritus vini Gallici had hastened the beating of the young fellow's heart. His ugliness soon vanished as Berard genially smiled, and then emptied a confused mass of gold, "greenbacks," and several checks on the table, supplementing this Golconda with a gold watch and chain and a huge cluster diamond pin, the last then being a distinctive badge of the "prosperous American jackass."

"Hold on, now, Fred!" grinned Steve, "Don't—don't, my boy, say anything you would be sorry for." He softly added, "Halloran is sending up two good bottles and a nice little supper. I am seventeen thousand dollars to the good. That is, if he don't stop the checks. But," he thoughtfully smiled, "this fellow can't afford to 'squeal.' His partners in the grocery business would instantly 'bounce' him. I won all he had, except the lady passenger," chuckled Mr. Berard. "Now, boy!" he energetically said, as he handed Frederick Wyman three sealed envelopes bearing the cabalistic names of "Kellogg & Heuston," "Kustel & Riotte," and "E. Molitor & Co.," "there are your assays! They gave me certified copies. Unless I have thrown away two hundred dollars, your ore goes way up over Andy Bowen's mark. It is very rich."

Wyman sank back quickly in his chair, and eagerly drained a glass of brandy forced on him. For he had paled before the finger of Destiny. Something in his manner impressed the reckless gambler.

"Can you get hold of that mine?" whispered Steve Berard, with a strange light gleaming in his eyes.

"If you will stand in with me, Steve," muttered the young man, who had torn open the envelopes.

"On the square—to the death!" said Berard, as the clink of champagne bottles was heard on the stair. Their hands met in a silent compact—to the death!

And, far away, lonely Robert Devereux stirred uneasily in his sick bed down in the cabin in Grizzly Cañon.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Robert Devereux Declines a Drink.

"I have studied over the best plan to hoodwink Devereux, Fred," said Steve Berard, a month later, as he looked over the ashes of his Cabaña at Wyman. They were seated in the safe concealment of the private back room of the "Blue Wing" gambling den. Without, the drifted snows lay piled deep in cañon and gully, and thunderous avalanches, which had slipped down from the peak of Mount Davidson, hung threateningly over Virginia City buried in its winter shroud.

The only sound of life was the lazy puffing of the steam exhausts down on the Comstock. Only a few homeless outcasts staggered along the bleak stony mountain-side. Within the "swell" gambling saloon was that air of genial comfort which is not unconnected with prosperous vice. Strange to say, the children of Belial, however threateningly the future may lower in the Far Beyond, frequently have what is called a "pretty good time" in this mundane sphere. It is only a "vale of tears" for the painfully conscientious, who carry their self-allotted burden heavily, like poor Christian in that most estimable book "The Pilgrim's Progress."

But, life seemed worth living even on this dreary winter afternoon to both Messrs. Wyman and Berard. The untold success of the "deus ex machina" faro box arrangements "specially imported" by the gray-eyed gam-

bler, had quickly enriched him. A snug, quiet percentage, weekly rolled into his pockets; for conversation would be awkward, should Steven Berard drop a single word to any disgruntled patron.

The great strikes of rich veins on the Lode, had drawn new hordes of liberal moneyed men to the winter city, and leisure, excitement, and fictitious values, made money roll easily down the sides of Mount Davidson, and all around the streets still clinging to its precariously rocky breast. The influx of politicians, newspaper men, alleged scientists, and varied adventurers "made Rome howl"; to use the cheerful words of Andy Bowen. The snugly nested members of the "demi-monde" now looked askance at several really authenticated families.

A pale faced Priest and a robust Methodist circuit rider regularly lifted up their dissonant voices in Sabbath prayers, to the utter astonishment of the ungodly. The school bell clanged out daily, and on Sundays it called to church, with occasional odd jobs as a fire alarm. When it was "packed in" with some ceremony, its usefulness in tapping for the Vigilantes of the future was dimly hinted at. The bounding pulses of life throbbed freshly now along the Comstock, and even upstart wealth began to show its ambitious head. As yet, Virginia City had thrown out no dazzling meteoric representative in the Senate, in the gay circles of Paris, or in the finance baronies of the world's Plutus disciples. Nevada was as yet only a Territory, but the "truly loyal," yearned to have its baby star sparkle on the flag which drooped so sadly now over the butchered thousands of Fredericksburg and Stone River.

"Let's have your plan, Steve," said Wyman, thoughtfully. "This town is getting pretty lively now. With

the impending elections, the winter racket here, and the fevered stock craze at San Francisco, there may be any day some big upheaval here. I have tried to get Devereux to go down this winter to that wife of his who is always snivelling for him. Then, we could examine the shaft and tunnel in peace. But he sticks. He is useless here. He swears that he will be better in the spring, and then, able to take the whole management. That will spoil our plans. He might soon blunder on the truth."

"Whited-headed Steve" eyed the speaker keenly. "Suppose that I let you have enough ready money now to tempt him to go down to San Francisco and rest there till the weather is warmer?" Berard jingled his pockets, in a comfortable mood.

"Ah! No, Steve," replied Wyman. "I could not explain to him, where or how I got it. No one would honestly advance anything on my interest, and he knows that I can get nothing now from home. All is war and tumult. The old gentleman may be in Cincinnati even now, if General Bragg only has the nerve." The two plotting scoundrels then drank to the "C. S. A." in an honest sentiment of sectional pride, for the "Stars and Bars" soared high.

"Then, my boy," cautiously said Berard, "as this fool, Devereux, seems so dead set on watching the mine, all we can do is to lure him away for a couple of months. I have a 'dead square' friend—old man Holman—down on the Carson river. His ranch is only five miles from Carson City, and, by Jinks, its the only homelike place in Washoe. He's under some considerable obligations to me. Now, if Devereux won't cross the Sierras, then try and get him to go down there for a few weeks. He can have woman nursing, and milk and eggs, and honey and chickens down

there. Holman has got four wives tucked away there. He is one of the first fellows that Brigham Young sent over here in '48. Sensible old boy! While his party scratched around after a little surface gold they found, he took up three thousand acres of the Carson valley. His hay and stock, trading with the government and the emigrants have made him solidly rich. So rich that when silver was discovered here in '59, he only laughed. I've kept away from your partner, and he does not even know me by sight. You tell me he's a sort of a home fellow, a kind of book man."

"Yes," said Wyman. "He was manager of a bank in Massachusetts. He got involved in some way. He's a spirited fellow, but weak at heart. He came over here under a sort of a cloud. I fancy his wife is a peg or two above him in nerve and stamina."

"Then he'll be good company for old man Holman's long-legged Mormon girls. They're always begging books and spouting poetry," replied the gambler.

"Can you depend on Holman?" eagerly said Wyman.

"I should smile," gaily replied Steve. "You see Brown, 'Killer Brown,' makes his headquarters there. He keeps all his fast horses in old Holman's care. Brown is solid with 'the boys,' and he is a game friend of mine. You see," continued Berard reflectively, "Just after you came here, some 'Smart Aleck' around Carson ran away with Holman's prettiest Mormon daughter. These gals are just as romantic and as high-blooded here as your Southern beauties. I suppose it's loneliness, and the climate," Berard leered in a secret joy.

"What did you do?" languidly asked Fred, his ears tingling at the mention of the "gang of pretty Mormon girls."

"Oh, I followed them. You see the chap wanted to get to Truckee and get a parson, and marry the girl there over the California line. But I caught him at Reno, and put a ball into him, and brought the girl back. So old man Holman is my friend for life."

"Did you have any trouble?" said Wyman, with a slight shiver at Berard's perfect unconcern.

"Not a bit," cheerfully said Steve, taking a good "three finger" drink. "The old man is Justice of the Peace, and he discharged me 'on my own recognizance,'—self defense. There was no one but the gal there to look on," simply concluded the cold-blooded murderer.

"What did he do with the girl?" said Fred.

"Oh, I saw her, white-faced and peaked enough, loaded into an emigrant wagon, to be dumped out at the 'Endowment House' in Salt Lake. Some one of the Bishops was ready to marry her—seal her. They're a closer corporation even than us sporting men," said Steve, laughing, "She's saved from hell by this time."

"But, Devereux might leave there without our knowing it and catch us at our sly work. He would be astonished to find you down in the shaft or tunnel. It would be a 'dead give away,'" objected Wyman, doubtfully.

"He will never leave there without old man Holman knowing it," replied Steve, coldly. "I will run down myself once or twice, and, if he tried to sneak up here, he would be stopped on the road, sure enough."

There was a cruel ring in the gambler's voice. He saw Wyman's air of astonishment. "Nonsense, boy, if you are going to play for a million, you need some nerve—nerve first and last. Now, you have pluck enough, but no nerve yet. It will come with a sporting life. Now

Holman's ranch is only a death trap for any outsider. The old man is one of 'Slade's' gang. I am too. And a man who has our pass word is safe from the Indian Territory to Boise City, or from Fort Badger to Tucson. All the fancy stolen stock on the plains is handled by these fellows, who all understand each other. And 'Bise' McLean, in No Man's Land, is the king of the South, while 'Slade' is king of the North.'"

"Who is this McLean?" curiously said Wyman.

"Oh, he's a wild young Texan, who ran away from West Point after knifing a fellow cadet. Pity, too; 'Bison' was smart. He would have been an army officer in six months. They called him 'Bison' because he was covered, body and all, with soft, shaggy, thick hair. He now leads the war parties of the Apaches and Comanches."

"I should think it would go hard with him if the regular army ever catches him," moodily said Wyman, who had winced under the ugly word "knifing."

"His own classmates have sworn to burn him alive if they ever catch him, and he has already killed two of them in open single fight. He's a born devil is 'Bise' McLean. The only army officer who ever deserted to the Indians."

"Your recommendation of Holman is a solid one," said Wyman, who began to divine Berard's dark purpose in cooping up the sick man in the Mormon rancher's den of death—a robber's nest.

"Tell me of Devereux's girl," carelessly said Berard, his gray eyes fixed steadily on the young man. "How old is she?"

"Oh! she's now a handsome, likely child of eight or nine years. She looks to have the mother's grit from her

picture. The wife is half supporting herself as a costumer for one of the big variety theaters in San Francisco, the "Bella Union," I think. I suppose she has given up all hopes of fortune. She wants Devereux to come down and take a permanent place in some 'Frisco office, and try and make a little home."

"Ah!" ejaculated Berard, with a deep drawn breath. "Couldn't we buy the fool out? I don't mind risking a few thousands."

"Steve!" earnestly said Wyman. "This fellow is really silver mad. I don't know if it is second sight. Perhaps the nervous sensitiveness of his illness. He swears we've really got a mine; and he swears he will never leave it alive. He does."

"There he is mistaken, my boy," said Berard, rising with a cruel flash of his eyes. "He will leave it alive, but he won't come back to it, unless he can fly."

Finishing the brandy bottle at a gulp, Steve Berard's eyes gleamed yellow, as he said, "Now I'll get old man Holman to write to Devereux to come down and talk over the purchase of an interest. You 'lay low,' and leave it all to me. Holman will delay him and keep him on there. The women will all coddle him. They have to do just what the old man says. By God!" cried Berard, forgetting his professional coolness, "Mormon women never kick. They are as gentle as lambs. They've got to be. No airs. Not an air. It's only the young brood who cast sheep's eyes at the good-looking young Gentiles. But, the Danites have already laid out a few dozen of those lôve-sick Gentile fools. It ain't healthy. I'd sooner run off with a Pawnee chief's wife or a Sioux war chief's sister from a crowded camp than fool with a Mormon girl. These Mormon fellows

are scattered along on the road with their station ranches, from Idaho to Arizona and from San Bernardino away to Denver. They are a 'cold deck.' Tell me, when does the delegate election occur?" Berard was idly fingering his navy revolver.

"In three months," slowly said Wyman. "The territory was admitted in March, '61. They want to get it in as a state by '64, to give Abe Lincoln two more war Senators."

"That'll be a good time to do it," mused Berard, as he shoved his revolver back into its sheath, and then busied himself getting ready for an outing to inspect the half dozen faro games he was now interested in.

"To do what?" cried the startled young borderer.

Mr. Steven Berard turned back from the door. "To put the damned fool out of the way, if you can prove to me you have got this ore vein in that mine. If he knew what was good for him he would foot it to San Francisco the whole hundred and eighty miles, and not growl at the Truckee trail, either. I suppose we are to have an even interest, Fred, counting the whole mine?"

"Yes, yes!" eagerly cried the excited Wyman. "But who is to do it?" The young fellow's voice was quivering in the thrill of a first deliberately plotted crime.

"You will see," sententiously remarked Berard, as he filled his cigar case. "Look here, Fred, if you pull off a big stake here, what will you do? You can't go back South as an alien enemy. You couldn't hold title here now under the devilish Yankee iron-clad laws. We must get the title and records fixed all O. K. after he is done up," seriously ruminated Berard, with a business air.

"I shall never go back South, Steve," answered the youth, gazing complacently at himself in a twisted sheet

looking-glass. "If I do get money, I will have my fling in Europe first, then marry into some big family out here and settle down. This coast will be a great section yet for style and luxury."

Berard smiled, but he grew attentive as Wyman continued, "I have watched the metal here change as the mines are sunk, from three-quarters gold to three-quarters silver. Now, Steve, big, deep silver mining is a very scientific affair. There'll be a systematic hollowing out of this magic mountain. Millions will go into machinery, a great city and railroads will be here. If Abe Lincoln holds America together they will push the railroad on east over the plains. There will be place, power, and a high-toned money society. I want to get right into it at the top. That's my plan." Wyman's tongue ran on in rosy anticipation.

"And so you will build up your house of life on your first partner's bones," sneered Steve Berard. "Well he's a fool and a Yankee, anyway, but it's mighty rough on the woman! Still, if he won't get out of the way, we've got to put his light out." Berard was brisk and quietly cheerful in his manner.

"Steve," faltered the young dreamer, "you must not connect me with the—the—"

"Oh, nonsense!" roughly cried the gambler. "There's your damned lack of nerve. You are ready for the spoils, but you want to be held safe. I tell you again, you've got no nerve. Now, keep your eyes open and boost him off cheerfully when Holman's letter comes. He will have it in four days. Then come to me at once; till then, keep dark. I must be very careful. First, to see if you've really got this rich pay ore."

"It's five feet thick in the shaft, and I cross cut it eleven feet in the tunnel," eagerly cried the youth.

"All right then. It's a 'whack,'" answered the gambler. "I'll have to be sly. I may have some one else do it, or else pick a quarrel on politics. I'll work him off sure enough. Now, remember!" and Mr. Steven Berard walked away, unconcernedly whistling, "Dixie's Land."

Fred Wyman's face was blanched as he rode down to the shades of Grizzly Cañon to meet the sick man who trusted him, his partner, to the last, the very last.

"What a cold-hearted young brute that Wyman is," mused Steve Berard, as he kept his eyes fixed to the front between the nervously pointed ears of a fine trotter that evening. A sleigh dash of ten miles to the Five Mile House and return, cleared the card sharper's brain for his evening devotions to Fortuna. "If the vein is there, we will have all the money we want, and I'm glad to have the thing come off down at Carson."

Mr. Berard noticed as he drove back along C street several knots of earnest looking men eagerly eying his great roan trotter. He never fancied that they objected to the carmine-cheeked, mouse-eyed little French queen of Faro at his side. But, even cool gray-eyed sports can miss a trick, now and then.

A peculiarly atrocious murder caused by a quarrel over this very woman had caused the quick sprouting of that fern seed of magic power which at last bringeth out the "Regulator," the "Vigilante," the "Committee of Safety," and other sturdy step-children of "Judge Lynch."

Steve Berard was still unaware of the crystallization of a certain determined feeling in Virginia City that certain dark fruit was ripening soon to dangle from telegraph pole

or mining hoist frame, with that peculiarly uneasy twisting of the eccentrically knotted hangman's rope, when Andy Bowen good-humoredly remarked, "Steve, you sports ought not to shear the boys too close, and be too free with the knife and pistol. A mining crowd is an ugly one sometimes." Steve had only shown the faint wintry gleam of the gambler's smile, "Andy," he said quietly, "when the tidal wave of reform strikes this here camp, I will be over the hill and far away. I know just how high a telegraph pole is, and I never yet have worn out my welcome. Let's all have a drink."

In the lofty attitude of the Comstock, "a drink" punctuated all social meetings, with its staccato ejaculation "How!" Equally fit for wake, funeral, christening or wedding; the first hailing sign of friendship, the last sigh of regret, the "drink" was the smallest current gold coin amity, and a legal tender never to be refused. Certain grave public functions might defer the solemnity, but moral insanity, or rooted hatred alone, explained a declination. To the shaggy-breasted giants of the Comstock, a deliberate refusal was, if public, and premeditated, the cut direct, and the one unpardonable sin. A lurid mist of uncertain but bloody chronological anecdotes hovered around the memories of ill-starred men, cut off in their prime, who had blundered upon their doom. Some local regret still clings to the virginal name of a strayed theological student, whose mild but positive declination had been the "deep damnation" of his sudden taking off. Alas! His firmness of moral principle was mistaken for that unseemly pride which goeth before a fall—and it was treated accordingly.

The fact of a general subscription for a railing and

wooden cenotaph to mark the spot where the lost lamb had lain, until removed eastwardly, showed a general good-humored regret. The spread-eagle, in the national colors, with a neat label, "We mourn his loss," was a credit to the sign painter, who had just illuminated Virginia City's one-hand fire engine, with a somewhat similar device—other words, but the same stencilled eagle!

While Steve Berard lived easily on the involuntary contributions of the "patent faro box" victims, Mr. Frederick Wyman shared not the social public diversions of his friend. Somewhat in Berard's debt, Wyman could not afford to share his expensive pleasures. He now avoided all public association with the "sport" element, and in the days following the interview, when the trapping of Devereux was arranged, the borderer clung closely to the cabin in Grizzly Cañon. With the aversion of a southerner to all menial hand labor, Wyman revolted at the simple personal care devolving on him of a fortnightly effort at his own laundry work. But it was painfully achieved at the side of the nearest brook, and with the aid of the faintly gleaming winter sun.

Standing there, one day, watching his coarse jerkins and canvas overalls waving in the Mount Davidson zephyrs, Wyman started as Devereux called him back into the cabin. For a friendly passer-by had thrown in at the open door a couple of letters.

Wyman eyed his sickly querulous partner with an ill-concealed disgust, as he joined him at the rough table. The mean interior of the cabin had never looked so shabby to the son of an easy slave-owning planter. A few cast-off tin meat cases, some emptied boxes, buckets improvised from kerosene cans, the walls covered

with gaudy prints cut from the "illustrated" weeklies, the smoke grimed ceiling and clay floor recalled the hovels of the "poor white trash" he had often seen in Arkansas. He only missed the coon skins nailed against the doors for sun curing, and the squalid children.

"Curse this rocky wilderness!" he muttered. "A raccoon has too much native sense to stay here." And, the young man cast longing glances at the far dim Sierras, towering far away in the crystal air.

Far beyond their summits, yet less than two hundred miles, lay San Francisco, with its hastily thrown together mansions, where bright eyes gleamed over whitest bosoms, passionately heaving in life and love. There jewels gleamed; the rich laughter of women rang out—not the painted mechanical puppets of the tawdry dance halls—but women worth the winning. There, the boards groaned under feasts glittering in silver and crystal. Far-off music seemed to haunt his dulled ears; the waving forms of the beauties in the dance, the glitter of high life—real life—not the every day realistic drudgery of the adventurer, not the occasional debauch of the idle worker, all charmed him. He yearned for the smooth and easy path where roses smiled around the trail of the softly sliding serpent of Pleasure.

"I am going to leave you, Fred; that is, for a few days, or even weeks," said Devereux, with the hesitating, ambitionless voice of a man dragged down by ague's gnawing. "I have received an offer for an interest in the mine. A man named Holman, down near Carson, writes me and he wants to see me. Can you get along without me here for a little while?"

Wyman's heart beat like a trip hammer, and he turned

away his head to hide a crimson flush of physical shame; for the poor bird was fluttering along into the snare.

"Well! If you must go, I suppose you must!" indecisively rejoined Wyman, busying himself with his pipe. "I can hold on to the mine, and keep up the twenty days work in every three months. It may do you good. Where is this man's place, do you say?" He turned away to hide his joy.

"Near Carson City," answered Devereux, in a sickly monotone. "He says that I can pick up a bit there, as he has a homelike place; and there are women there, too, of his family. What do you say? Shall I write him that I will come?" The man's fate was trembling in the balance.

"You might as well go down on the stage to-morrow, and you would beat your own letter in schedule time. I'm going up to the 'burg,' and I'll hold you a place in the stage," said Wyman.

"All right," replied his partner. "Do you wish to sell any of your own quarter interest?" Wyman started. He was taken by surprise. After a few moments, he answered, sullenly:

"No. If we don't strike it in the Mariquita, then I'll work my way back East over the Sierras, and give it up. But I'll stay on here and take care of your interest."

That night, while Robert Devereux stirred uneasily in his rough couch, as a crackling back log threw out its shower of sparks in its sudden fall, or when, flushed with fever, he drained the can of cool water, brought by the poor old Indian, who watched his fevered moanings when the "spell" was on, Steve Berard and Frederick Wyman perfected all their final arrangements for "taking care of his interest."

"Get him off in good shape, Fred," soothingly said Berard, as they parted, for a late faro game was on.

"Find out where he keeps all his papers and things. Don't let him stow any ugly reminders away around the cabin."

"Oh! He'll take all down there with him," answered the younger villain. "Then I'll get everything, right enough."

"Holman will look out for that," remarked Berard, cheerfully, as he added: "When he is safely picketed out to grass there, I will give you the word. Then, you and I will go through the mine, in short order."

"And, if we find what I know is there," eagerly whispered Wyman, "you make it a sure thing for me—and—I'll make the other a dead cold game.

"And, no talk, either," answered Berard.

In the wintry gray of the ensuing morning, Robert Devereux leaned out of the window of the stage coach, and feebly waved his hand to his stalwart young partner, standing on the platform of the Magnolia saloon. For, with a deft eccentric curve, and a fusillade of crackling oaths, the driver tooled his "scratch" team out of the stable yard to the straight run out of town.

"Fred's a good fellow, true, staunch; and I am safe in his hands," mused Devereux, as his wearied head sank back against the leather cushions in the stage. He fell into a sleep of exhaustion, and he missed the last view of gloomy Grizzly Cañon from the divide near Gold Hill, as it lay silent there in the shadow, under the rocky knobs of outcroppings marking the fancied course of the metal-bearing veins of the "Mariquita." There was nothing to call him back to the squalor and misery he left behind. But Hope with rosy fingers pointed onward to Holman's ranch, and a dim undercurrent of cheerful imaginings followed the jingle of the rattling trace chains. The sleeper only heard the rattle of golden coins. A portion of his interest marketed, with ready money, then, a few months

with the brave, bright-eyed wife in far San Francisco, and the merry child, whose sweet, loving face he only saw in his dreams.

Fred Wyman turned away with a sneer, as the stage swept around a huge rocky promontory, and his partner was swallowed up in its overhanging shadows. "There goes a man who is a mere slave of an absent woman's will. A poor, nervous driveller. No woman will ever make a fool of me." Secure in the complacency of the bright armor of his youth, Wyman drank to his own reflection in the saloon mirror, and then sauntered away to report to Berard, who was "lying perdu," for this day.

"I will have all ready for you, Steve," said the now eager traitor. "Old Captain Johnson shall keep watch over the tunnel and shaft. I can easily show you what you wish to verify in a couple of nights' secret work. Day and night are the same down there in those holes."

"All right! I'm your man," replied the laconic Berard. "Stay down below until I get word from old Holman. Brown goes down to-morrow, and Holman then gets the private tip to keep Devereux there. I will never show up at the Ranch unless I happen along by mere accident."

The cold shivers were chasing each other along the spinal nerves of Mr. Frederick Wyman, as he quickly walked away with a nod of humble obedience. These necessary practical details of a crime atrociously planned in cool mental deviltry startled Wyman, who was shyer than the poor girl, stealing with strangely flaming eyes, to a first rendezvous. But his mean, egoistic, callous and selfish heart had coldly abandoned to his fate the man for whom mother and child were now praying on their knees that night by the stormy San Francisco Bay.

"I fancy Berard is right," muttered Wyman, as he picked his way down Grizzly Cañon. He seemed to fear

even the dark shadows now. "I have the heart, the pluck at last, but I am not sure of my nerve," he murmured; "that's what Steve says." Keeping even the poor old Indian in sight as a lay figure to ward off dark and haunting thoughts, Wyman could not realize that he only needed success, the vulgar but concrete power of money, to change him into an insolent bully. He needed but the crushing force of the golden hammer to drive in the hall-mark of his smiling, insincere face upon the pinchbeck metal of the gilded society of the West. "If we only strike it, I will show them what I can do," the vain plotter proudly dreamed, as he contemplated the graceful outlines of his own shadow. "Once up there among the swells, I am as good as any of the Californian quality. They all lack background, and a verified history." The sneer was lost on the wild winds wailing down Grizzly Cañon, while Robert Devereux lingered far away in wonder at the cordial welcome of the oily Mormon ranchero and his passively obedient sad-eyed womanhood.

"He even doubts me!" ruminated Wyman, a week later, as Berard, in the gray dawn, loaded his strong saddle horse, hidden behind the cabin in Grizzly Cañon, with the last saddle-bag's burden of selected samples from shaft and tunnel. For hours, Wyman had watched the lithe gambler burrowing in the exposed masses of the crumbling chloride, or eagerly scooping out with his hand the rich, fat sulphides crumbling under the blows of a short miner's pick.

"You can work like a horse, Steve," admiringly remarked the young man.

"So I can, so I could, so I used to in Missouri; but hard work and I have parted company forever," the gambler shortly answered.

Eagle-eyed, nervous, suspicious, the arch villain buried

himself in the little drifts and cross-cuts made by his own toiling hands.

"This is my deal, Fred," he laconically remarked, "and no man shuffles the cards without my having a cut."

On the last morning of the secret exploration, he turned at last sharply and faced Wyman: "See here, Fred, there's lots of this stuff. I'm satisfied of that. I have locked up all I have taken, and I will now have it privately worked over for the last time. Now, if the assays come out all right, I'll back you through thick and thin, and we will get this mine into our hands, even interests, mind you. But I will send a friend down here to watch for me. I do not want you to come to town, to go near the mine myself, or to open a letter or telegram till I tell you to come up to town. I'll send you down all the supplies you want, daily."

"But the mine?" babbled Fred.

"I'll have that watched, too, on the private. Don't you forget it! Do you accept?" The gambler spoke roughly. The cross blood in Frederick Wyman's heart boiled up. His youthful gorge rose.

"And if I do not?" he snarled, with one attempt at self-assertion. A sudden flash of cold steel glittered before Wyman's eyes. The navy revolver had never looked as inconveniently oversized as on this particular day when Wyman looked down its loaded barrel. "I'll kill you in your tracks if you double on me; for I have got your fool of a partner now where I want him."

Wyman's glance dropped, and his hand left the butt of his own pistol. "Anything, anything, Steve," he murmured; and he stood there trembling and fascinated as the gambler rode away.

Four days later, Berard walked into the cabin where Wyman and his secret jailer sat over their cards and

whisky. By the brookside the gambler indicated the "Mariquita" with a wink. "We've been struck by lightning luck. There's millions in that location." Wyman's teeth chattered as he walked away and sat down on a stone by the icy flowing waters of the brook leaping out of the buttressing crags over him there, covering the unsuspected bonanza.

"Are you sure?" he faintly said.

"I know it!" firmly answered his master. "Get your things together and come up and stay at the Golden Eagle for a couple of weeks, for I am going down to Holman's ranch. But I'll first go to Washoe City, catch the stage and go on over at night to Truckee. Then I'll happen in at the old man's place at Carson about the time of this election of delegates to the Convention."

"When do you want me?" meekly murmured the man who had loosened this growing afrite from the bottle.

"Oh! Get up there about night-fall. By the way, leave all your traps here. Old Johnson can look after them. I'll send a decent outfit into your room, and leave you plenty of money." Berard paused, in this unusually long personal announcement.

"And, what shall I do up in town?" hazarded Wyman, now drifting along helplessly under the piloting of the cool villain, who had mastered him.

"Just lay around town, and keep your mouth shut. Stay away from the cabin here, till you hear from Holman's ranch."

When Wyman was alone, he felt a strange new sensation. Some strange warm fluid, new to him, seemed to be coursing in his veins. His head was unconsciously elevated, in a new born pride, but all that afternoon he started at the mere crackle of a twig, or the chance shadow of a passing wayfarer in the lonely trail leading down to

the Carson. At night-fall, he left the cañon and dared not look back to where he had so often sat in the cool of the evening before their cabin door, with the man who was now lingering by the great stone fireplace at Holman's ranch. In the hush of that winter evening, as he climbed the hill to the straggling city on the mountain's breast, the huge black mass of Mount Davidson seemed to him to be only a giant stone rolled over the crushed breast of Robert Devereux.

"I hope to God I will never see or hear of him again!" was the singular prayer which ascended to Heaven from the cowardly renegade's heart.

Three weeks later, Elder Holman of the Church of the Latter Day Saints sat, in the noon sunshine, gazing out complacently on the far sweeping Carson meadows which were his own property. The comfortable seat of his road wagon was the throne of the Mormon dignitary, who veiled here his unlawful rank, under the genial vulgate of Old Man Holman. He was in high good humor on this election morning. A new government contract for hay at fifty dollars per ton, enabled him to dispose of the vast crop which cost him little, save cheap rations and unlimited whisky for the Piute aboriginal squaws who cut it. Three thousand acres of land simply pre-empted, was his baronial domain. On the hills, grazed the cattle and horses picked up from the emigrant trains, still pouring westward. For they crawled along over the Rockies, from "St. Joe" and Kansas City, to thread the never-ending Platte valley, wander, weary-footed, past Salt Lake, drag down the Humboldt, and then, by Donner's Gap and Truckee, enter the great Sacramento Valley through the eternally uplifted gates of the Sierras. From these hardy parents of the untamed brood of the Golden Land, the sly, oily old Mormon became rich by a traffic on their

necessities. He fell heir to their abandoned household gear. Their broken-down trains were all refitted at his shops, and even his pale-faced harem spoiled the care-worn emigrant mothers of their last treasured womanly gear.

While the Indian squaws cultivated "garden truck" for the near-by market of Carson City, the territorial capital, Holman used the Indian "bucks" to herd his cattle and to convey the produce to the nearest settlements. The sordid squaws worked for rations and shining silver, with trading goods of inflammatory color, but the lordly warrior toiled alone for that whisky, the all potent "fire water" which unlocks the savage heart over the whole world. "The warrior bent his crested head" only to linger lovingly with his copper-hued lips glued to the neck of the magic brown bottle.

On the frontier, it is an even race for "Home Rule," between an attractive woman, even with a go-as-you-please history, and the invincible spirits of wine. King Alcohol usually creeps closer to the heart and lingers longer than the vicarious daughters of Venus who awake long slumbering passions. The wide swath cut by "forty rod whisky" in this weary world puts the grim record of Attila the Destroyer far back into well merited obscurity.

It was whispered in Reno and Carson, yea, even to Virginia City's halls, that old Holman artfully kept several large U. S. Cavalry posts garrisoned near him, a splendid market for his stock, horses and hay, by inducing his swarthy warrior helots, when not cutting grass, to go out and make insane demonstrations of revolt in the nearest mountains. Mail carriers waylaid, a periodical Indian scare, and all these threatened uprisings enriched the old hypocrite, who regarded all this only as a good joke on "Uncle Sam."

His "Uncle" was quite busied then with Messrs. Lee, Bragg, Beauregard, and Johnston, and the ocean was lit up with the flames of burning Yankee ships. So "Brother Holman" worked all his little schemes in safety, for Brigham Young was now the uncontrolled master of the Middle Gates of America at Echo Cañon. There, with twenty thousand stalwart Mormons at his back, he could say, "No Thoroughfare," for the magic locomotive would not scream the knell of the Mormon Church for several long and weary years. And the country's fate trembled in the balance!

"Devereux," heartily cried the old Danite (whose awful secret rank was unknown in the Carson Valley), "Don't mope around here always with my women. You make me jealous." The coarse old patriarch guffawed, as the sun-bonneted women fled away.

They all liked Devereux's gentle ways, his personal refinement, and one or two of the "wives" had even furtively chatted with the convalescent about the "States," which they were doomed never to see again. Swept into the grinding mill of the world's strangest social experiment, these dull-eyed drudges still cherished a bit of hidden sentimentality at heart. The dull sameness of their anonymous maternity, drudgery and cowering slavery, yielded to Devereux's feeble yet tender sentimentality for his absent wife and child.

"See here, jump in and ride down to the polling place with me. I've got to see that all goes on square and fair. It's only a couple of miles down there at the Willows Cross Roads." Devereux slowly yielded to Holman's hearty persuasions. Lingering along in the artful bargaining, waiting till the rancher could sell a "drove of beeves," or five hundred cavalry horses to get ready gold, the chief owner of the "Mariquita" was content, for his weekly letters from partner Wyman told that all was well.

"If I get the new mail contracts, or close my annual hay supply with Uncle Sam, I can then pay you out in "greenbacks," urged Holman as he dallied daily with the unsuspecting stranger within his gates. For, banks there were none near him.

Robert Devereux fell naturally in with Holman's easy mood, and never once turned back his eyes to where the clustered women watched them from the porch, as they drove away over the springy Carson meadows. There was one among the dull-eyed women who went back into her den in the great old two-storied ranch house, and hid her face in her blue cotton apron, crying the pitiful wail of a feeble woman.

"Mother Louise" was now an old woman, Holman's first wife. She had passed all the days of passion's storms. Whatever poor bit of timid-beating heart she ever had, was now broken. In secret sadness, she had seen addition after addition made to the roomy old caravansera. As Holman prospered and waxed socially defiant, younger, more comely women claimed the brief honors of the ruling favorite. But the faded old "first wife" was intelligent. Fear and mere habit had made her loyal. It was she who had brought the smooth-faced old scoundrel the loaded revolver which the stranger guest might have felt in Asa Holman's overcoat pocket as they drove away, crowded together on the wagon seat. No one but old "Mother Louise" knew of the secret visits of Killer Brown and his ilk.

She, alone, had observed Steve Berard wandering around at night-fall, in the farthest corral, behind the storehouse, for several days past, with the cold-eyed despot who brutalized her, and yet trusted her, alone, of all the world.

"For God's sake, Asa!" she had timidly whimpered, "Have no harm come to this poor man, under our roof.

Think of yourself." But she was fain to be silent as the sturdy old scoundrel threw her from him.

"By God, Louise, if you take on, I'll cart you down to John, on Salt River in Arizona, and he can then take care of you." The poor old dethroned wife hid her whitened face in her deserted room, for the one son of these early days, now a fiery apostle of Brigham, was far away pushing the feelers of the Mormon octopus on toward Arizona and Mexico.

The frightened woman, sobbing alone in her room, could not divine the sly, mean rascality of her husband, who did not care to risk his life, or the enjoyment of his "much good" in a mere blood quarrel. But Magistrate Holman, the leading citizen, had his cue and his eyes never left the face of the stranger as they dallied in "bald disjointed chat" until they reached the polling place.

An excited, drunken crowd of several hundred lingered around the Willows Cross Roads, at a safe distance; for by the law's light prohibition, the voting place was located in some sheds, near the stage house station and grog shop, where Holman's meaner villainies were usually enacted. Frowsy indians, playing cards, on greasy blankets stretched near the fences, a few dozen horses tied to the rails of the corrals, a fringe of armed, vulgar loafers, and the occasional visits of wagon loads of noisy voters, enlivened the great day of the Constitutional Convention election.

Devereux, finally voting at Holman's dictation, after several feeble protests, was really glad to leave the scene, when the Elder Magistrate, the leader of public opinion in the valley, had pompously inspected the whole proceedings.

"There may be some letters. It's near stage time." carelessly remarked Asa Holman, as they leisurely drove over to the Cross Roads.

A motely crowd of loungers, purchasers and patrons of the bar, filled the Cross Roads store. In the tedium of waiting for the assorting of a hundred letters by a half drunken clerk, cigar in mouth, and in his shirt sleeves, Devereux wandered out into the bar-room, where a few flashy illustrated papers lay spread on the vacant card tables. From without, the sounds of political quarrel, cheers for the Red, White and Blue, hurrahs for Jeff Davis, and all the Babel of a day of days at the Cross Roads, jarred upon the weakened nerves of the sick prospector. Wearied of waiting, he rose to pass out, and, with his eyes vainly searching for "Brother Holman," essayed to edge his way through the newer patrons of the "whisky spring." A pair of sinewy hands whirled him roughly round before the bar. For the first time he saw, at close range, the disgustingly vicious face of "White-headed Steve."

"See here, every man has got to drink to the Stars and Bars. Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Hats off, and whisky all round. Damn Abe Lincoln!" the gambler cried, in an affected fury. Devereux was half way to the door when the gambler's hot breath was on his cheek.

"Don't back out, you white-livered Yankee," cried Steve Berard, whose hand had dropped to his side. In the nervous revulsion of the sudden onslaught, Devereux stepped back a pace with his hands clasped behind him.

"I don't drink to Jeff Davis; I——" There were two deafening reports in quick succession, a crash of glass, as several frightened loafers sprang through the flimsy windows, and as the barkeepers raised their heads from their concealment behind the bar, the blue smoke drifted away. "White-headed Steve," as repulsive as a cotton-mouthed moccasin, was there, still erect. Springing back a step or two, he still held his smoking pistol cocked in his hand.

Not a word escaped his thin, cruel lips as Asa Holman leaned over the prostrate form of Devereux, writhing on the floor, with a thickening pool of warm red blood stealing out from under the twitching arms. The lips of the dying man moved. Holman bending down over him, heard the last sigh of the parting spirit: "My God, Mary, the child!"

And as the outsiders crowded to the door, Berard's voice broke the silence: "Take his pistol away, Judge. That's all. He wasn't quick enough."

When Elder Holman laid the undischarged pistol on the bar, before them all, his husky voice shook slightly as he said: "What's all this about, gentlemen? This is most unfortunate. This man was staying down at my house."

In five minutes the soberest of the bystanders were awaiting the summons of a coroner's jury, to the little rear office, where Robert Devereux's face was slowly stiffening from the waxen warmth of the passing, into what the men of the scalpel call the "rigor mortis."

Steven Berard, in an adjoining storeroom, was surrounded by an excited crowd. "Don't talk, Steve," cried a hard-faced man, pushing his way to the front. "Judge Holman, himself, knows that this here fellow pulled his gun first. Keep quiet. You'll be out all right."

To a casual stage passenger, who leaned against a door, the sudden sobering of Mr. Steve Berard looked very strange. The outsider quickly wended his way to the now waiting stage, and as he dropped into his seat, muttered, "Looks like a 'put-up job.' The poor fellow never tried to shoot. That I know. I'll be glad to get out of this murderous hole alive." The stage was miles away before the stranger suddenly started. "That pistol, yes, some one dropped it there near him. For what purpose?

Poor fellow, he looked rather decent. Sort of Eastern man, I guess." And, on his arrival in Virginia City, the Postal Inspector, who prudently traveled in strict incognito, marveled that the "Carson City Times" made no mention of the incident.

"The fact is,"said Asa Holman,on the day following the tragedy, as he talked with the editor of the one journal of Carson City, "My women are taking on awfully about this. It's the first killin' near our ranch. The jury found it was 'self-defense,' and, true, there was this man's pistol in his hand, you see. I could do nothing but let Berard go. He's a sort of a half-way peaceable fellow,is Steve. So, as it's all regular, I wish you would not stir this thing up. All the boys down there say it was 'square shootin'.' I heard two shots myself."

"Did this man shoot at Steve?" the editor languidly said, as he motioned the rich farmer into the nearest saloon for a last solemn drink to the manes of the departed.

"Well, that's argued," said the cautious Mormon, scratching his head. "I picked up the pistol and laid it on the bar. It's gone! Somebody whipped it away in the hurry."

"Where's Steve?" queried the journalist as he finished his drink.

"Oh, he got out of the valley. Gone back to Virginia City by way of Washoe City. He was quite badly cut up about this."

"Who was this man, anyway?" was the last interrogatory of the man of ink.

"No one knows much. His things were all turned over to me. My women are looking through them, but he had no papers of any kind."

Elder Holman soberly drove away homeward in his com-

fortable road wagon, and never finished that remark. He meant to imply that Robert Devereux had no papers with him, when a shallow trench, hollowed in the Carson meadows, hid the pale, accusing face of the victim from the eyes of the sanctimonious Holman. Behind the Elder, Mother Louise, with blanched face, looked at the hasty ceremony. She alone knew where the missing pistol was hidden. She alone knew of the vigil in which Holman and Steve Berard rifled all the poor belongings of the dead owner of the "Mariquita." Steven Berard hurrying away to the scene of future triumphs, bore, in his flinty bosom, the little packet of faded papers, which tied up the legal title to the hidden treasures.

The quiet of the winter night which closed down upon the lonely grave at Holman's ranch, was broken by no woman's wail, for, far away, Mary Devereux was comforting her child.

"We will all be so happy, Hope, when your father comes home to us." For, the waiting wife only knew vaguely of some impending stroke of good fortune.

CHAPTER III.

Administering Upon the Estate.

Frederick Wyman was a changed man in the four weeks of lonely waiting for tidings from the ranch on the Carson. In some strange, occult way, Berard had broken his spirit. He never even considered the mutiny of a stolen visit to where the buried riches of the "Mariquita" lay. Week by week the great "lode" was being traced southward to the edge of the high ridge overlooking Grizzly Cañon. "I shall not write to you," Berard had snapped out. "My man will keep me posted by our own 'grapevine telegraph.' Don't you fret about the mine. Have a good time. Wait, and keep your mouth shut."

The good time spun itself out into a galling and lazy slavery. The faces of the loungers, the painted visages of the cheap Cleopatras of Nevada, the dull round of visits to saloon, stage station, dance hall, and the street loitering, all these things became disgustingly familiar. To read was impossible. In a town boasting two hundred saloons, there was not as yet a single book store. Wyman dared not visit the principal mines. Even the daily chatter of the leather-lunged prospectors weighed upon him. For the thousandth time, he briefly explained that his partner had gone "over the Ridge" for rest and medical treatment. A slowly burning fever took possession of his mind, centered now upon the deed without a name. "What if Devereux should escape, should slip away, led on by his Heimweh? Perchance, an unhappy accident of the encounter might betray all. Then, discovery meant ruin."

That golden future grew black. The borderer wasted his youthful vigor in tossing at night upon a restless bed. He haunted the stage station and wearied the drivers with his too labored questions of the news from Carson City. The direct question, "Looking for your partner every day?" soon frightened him away.

And still, no news from the prowling human tiger who coveted the Mariquita. It was a cheerless spring afternoon, when a letter and telegram roused him to instant action. He shivered as he gazed at the signature of the letter—"Mary Devereux." He thrust the envelope quickly into his bosom. But every drop of blood bounded as he read the dispatch. "Meet me at the Virginia House, Gold Hill, to-night—all right." The signature "Steve," told the story of the ghastly achievement. It was all over! With an unsteady step, he sought the bar-room, and, even Mulholland, the dispenser of "giraffe" drinks, muttered in surprise,

"Take out a wholesale license, Fred. You are a large consumer. What's wrong with you?" Wyman dropped his eyes nervously.

"I don't know," he answered, almost humbly, as his teeth chattered, "I may have brought the Grizzly Cañon ague up here with me." He was cold indeed! His heart lay like a stone in his breast and his face was gray and ashen, as he cowered under heavy wraps in the buggy, which swiftly conveyed him to Gold Hill. He divined Berard's intentions in the coming quiet conference; the arrangements to perfect their title and possession. He knew not that Steve Berard had accurately gauged his lack of nerve. "That smug face of his would be a give away, until I tone him up a bit," mused the gambler, as he leisurely rode into the rival mining camp which seemed to fatten on the tail end of the great Comstock lode, follow-

ing the astounding expansion of Virginia City. For men were organizing "Companies," and anchoring sporadic masses of hastily thrown together machinery wherever a few rocky knobs even hinted of a vein beneath. It was the expansive period of the American "boom" locality, throbbing with the fiery fever of life, before crystallizing into solidity.

"Anybody here for me?" carelessly asked "White-headed Steve," as he finished his stern injunctions to the hostler to give his riding mare "Strideaway," the treatment of an equine princess.

"Gentleman from Virginia in the private card room," nodded the barkeeper, as he "set them up" with automatic neatness and the confidence of a long knowledge of Berard's habits.

The gambler passed on, without another word, into the room where Fred Wyman stood in waiting, trembling at the sound of the murderer's voice. Closing the door, Berard deliberately lit a cigar and dropped into a chair. Fixing his eyes on the eager Southerner, Steve said quietly, "Well, it's over. Any talk up here?"

"Not a word," answered Wyman, starting at the hollow sound of his own voice. "Did you get any papers from—from him?" faltered Fred, with an ill-concealed anxiety. His selfish egoism overcame his moral fear of this stunted little viperous destroyer who had sent poor Devereux to a "land without laughter."

"Nothing," unblushingly lied the "sport," as the thin packet pressed on his breast rose and fell with his breathing.

"Then," whispered the sorrowing partner, "I fear we are in for trouble. I got a letter from his wife to-day. He must have sent his certificates and papers down to her."

"What's in the letter?" shortly demanded Steve, without removing his cigar.

"I don't know. I could not bear to read it." Wyman's jaw dropped, as Berard held out his hand without a word. For the gambler despised the weaker villain of the dual conspiracy.

"Nothing there," he said, contemptuously, after a pause when he threw the letter back. "Only woman's rot about coming home, and so on. Now, we've got to work this thing neatly. You had better get out of the way a little, and leave me to do enough work on the mine to forfeit Devereux's interest. This woman will surely bother you with more letters. You can't very well make any decent excuses. She may get anxious. She may telegraph or come up here, if she's fool enough. You never can tell just what a woman will do," said Berard, closing his eyes, in a troubled and reminiscent manner. "They turn up in the funniest way, just when you don't want them. You could not explain very well to her. She has written to him at Holman's, and, also, to the old man. But, that's all safe. Old Asa will hold the letters to him, apparently unopened. The other, he won't notice. I guess they're poor enough, and she'll jump around a little, and then pick up somebody else."

Wyman walked to the window to hide his disgust. There was a shade of sentimentality in the unslaked, sensual nature of the florid young fellow.

"What do you propose?" he said, in a muffled voice.

"Give me a contract to sink the shaft a couple of hundred feet, and to run the main tunnel in the same distance. You can legally sign for yourself, and for Devereux, as his agent. You see you are supposed to know nothing of his death. That will give me legal control and possession of the mine. I will put a superintendent on, and hold posses-

sion till this racket blows over. He will, of course, know nothing of the late Devereux, and I will keep in the background. I am 'Munson & Co.,' or anybody else we choose to name. It's my money, anyway," said the gambler, with rude insolence.

"But how will I be safe, Steve?" querulously demanded Wyman. "I give up all to you, and have nothing to show for my own share in this new deal."

"I never break my word," sternly said the desperado; and he only spoke the truth. He accentuated this statement by the bright remark, "You had better go down to Steamboat Springs for a month. I'll run the thing alone here, till we have got his interest legally sold out for assessment work. Then we can fix up the title."

"I will not consent!" cried Wyman, bounding up, his face livid, for he thought of the hidden treasure which was to pave his golden way to the dazzling "upper tendom" of San Francisco's elastic Vanity Fair.

"You had better be reasonable. The man who is now watching that mine would fill you with lead like a stray coyote, if you set foot on it without my sanction!" remarked Mr. Steven Berard, with his hand on the familiar mahogany horn of that Colt's navy, which was now entitled to another cross. For prudential reasons, Berard had failed to inscribe it. "He don't count. Too much like killing a chicken," was the callous verdict of the slayer, as he had deliberately reloaded his weapon on the road after leaving Holman's Ranch. "Now, I want my supper. Be sensible, Fred. Don't get rusty. It won't pay. I will ride in to Virginia to-night. You come up with the stage about noon to-morrow. You will find me at the Golden Eagle. I will look around town a little. I will stake you, and we will split the thing on the square. You see I can not make you dead safe. We have got to patch

up papers and get the thing squarely in our hands, before we dare to show our title to it."

"You are right, Steve," submissively remarked Wyman, who reflected he was now alone with a desperate man in one of the "gang's" chosen resorts. No friendly witness was near to observe a duplication of the tactics which had sent Devereux to a bloody and an obscure grave.

"All right," cheerfully answered the gambler, who, however, allowed Wyman to go out before him as he motioned the youth onward to the bar, for the golden seal of friendship.

It never occurred to Frederick Wyman to test his physical superiority, or equal prowess with this self-reliant scoundrel over whom he towered. For, the cool gray eye of Berard never left his dupe a moment; and moreover Berard had promised him ready funds.

"Did you hear about Brown last night?" whispered the barkeeper to Berard, as Wyman, after drinking, strolled away out of hearing.

"No, what's up?" muttered Berard, with a strange, new sense of uneasiness.

"Brown made the mistake of his life. Had a row with a decent young fellow from the East in a saloon. Killed him with a knife, and then went to sleep, drunk, on the billiard table in the bar-room, and wouldn't let them even take the body away."

"Well?" impatiently demanded White-headed Steve.

"There's a big excitement at Virginia, and—and—some talk, Steve, of 'Regulators,' 'Vigilantes,' and all that. Look out for yourself, Steve. I wouldn't go up there to-night." The Ganymede was anxious and excited.

"What do you mean?" fiercely demanded the sport.

"They talk of running all the fancy men out of town there. I would not want you to get into any trouble. I tell

you that this thing has gone too far. Brown got up ugly this morning, and then threatened to kill Henry Van Sicle down at his hotel. Now, I know," and the voice sank still lower, "Van took his big shotgun and a couple of pistols and fled to the trails, and there will be trouble ahead. It is one or the other of them. And, Brown is drunk. A poor show!"

"Pshaw!" simply said Berard. "It's only a scare. Let me have an extra pistol! I'll ride up to town after my supper. I'll put 'Strideaway' up with a friend on a side street, and walk into the city. The boys will post me. Give me a dozen of your best cigars."

"All right, Steve," the boniface good-humoredly said. "You know your own mind best, but take care of yourself."

Berard nodded as he strolled into the supper room.

As the gambler leaned over the the arched neck of his beautiful mare, under the friendly stars that night, at parting from Wyman, the barkeeper stole up with a flask in his hand. "Take this Steve, it's cold on the road." And again he whispered, "By Heavens! I wouldn't risk it. Some of the boys say they are raising hell now up there." Steven Berard's dauntless face never moved a muscle. He thought of the treasure-stuffed veins of the Mariquita. With an oath, he dashed the spurs into the fretting steed whose hoofs left a long line of sparks on the flinty road, as she raced madly along toward the city of the hidden millions.

Before the graceful "Strideaway" dropped her wearied head at the friendly shelter of the friend's stable door, two men, armed to the teeth, were hidden in the box belfry of the little school house in Virginia City, ready to sound certain signals known only to the "101," a mystic organization of recent but ominous growth. As Berard lightly leaped from his horse, he stumbled and fell upon his face.

Something, for the first time in his life, chilled him to the marrow, as his waiting friend hastily drew him into the cover of his hut, barred the door and then blew out all the lights. "Lay low, Steve," a familiar voice cried. "We are already watched, and there are large bodies of men moving around the streets."

While the springing hoofs of "Strideaway" were keeping time to Steve Berard's anxious thoughts as he neared Virginia City, Frederick Wyman sat alone in his room at the hotel in Gold Hill. He was greatly disturbed. He had not failed to note the colloquy between Berard and the barkeeper, and the clustering of heads in the card room, as man after man rode into the yard, in somewhat unseemly haste, from the greater town, only four miles away. These men were mostly of the order of the human "rapacidæ." Haggard-eyed, anxious, armed to the teeth, they clustered together in the private card room, and Wyman, at a late hour, noted their silent departure on the Steamboat Springs road, in a body now swelled to fifteen or twenty by late arrivals.

"What's up?" hazarded Wyman to the barkeeper, as they were left alone in the deserted bar-room. Fred had quickly walked around Gold Hill's few straggling streets, and was astonished to see several mining offices and business houses brilliantly lit up, and bodies of earnest men, visible in the rooms which offered the only places of public assembly, at Gold Hill. He uneasily returned to his hotel, and it was well, for two armed men were now posted at each street corner, who carefully scrutinized all belated travelers. The hasty departure of the body of gamblers and all-round sporting men also caused Wyman to feel uneasy. He had also noted the exit of two or three of the hostlers of the hotel stable, mounted on bare-back steeds, and saw them disappear on the gallop toward Virginia. He never

knew that these private scouts were skillfully posted on the road between Virginia City and Gold Hill, to warn the fleeing adventurers of "Virginia," to make a detour and avoid danger at Gold Hill. The "101" had blossomed about four hours later at Gold Hill than at the larger end of the Comstock cornucopia of gold and silver.

But the barkeeper, alert and active, at once divined that the hollows and cañons, the alkali plains, rolling hills, straggling forests of pine, spruce and fir, stretching around the great mining camps, offered a good temporary shelter to the surprised men of leisure. Cattle ranches abounded on the shores of Humboldt, Mud, Pyramid, Carson and Walker lakes. The road stations, like Holman's Ranch, were also friendly hiding places. The shores of beautiful Lake Tahoe, that sparkling diamond flashing in the bosom of the Sierras, were thickly lined with wood-cutters' camps. Here the Knights of the Green Cloth, with full purses, could hide till they might safely join their friends in Carson City, Reno, Truckee, or even Nevada, Placerville and Sacramento.

"I will save as many of the boys as I can," the man of mixtures regretfully vowed. For he, alone, knew that "Brown's mistake" had brought on the public spasm of virtue predicted by the genial Andy Bowen. When Wyman questioned him, the barkeeper busied himself at a symmetric rearrangement of the multicolored fluids of the long bar, the shrine of Bacchus. "I don't know," he carefully answered. "Some racket at Virginia City. We will know all in the morning."

Wyman sat late in his room that night. He was in a moody despair. Before Berard galloped away, a loosely contrived agreement, signed at the dictation of Berard, gave him the colorable possession of the mine, under pretense of the extension of shaft and tunnel. In return for

this, Frederick Wyman held the check of Steven Berard, on the Agency of Wells, Fargo & Co., for ten thousand dollars. "This will make you feel safe, Fred," roughly said Berard, "and if you need funds at once, you can get it cashed here in Gold Hill." With a simple directness, Steve had called in the proprietor of the "Virginia House." This magnate, who sat by his stove in a dignified silence all day, broken only by trips to the bar, or a chat with some mining magnate, said, as he looked at the check, "Certainly, sir; Mr. Berard's check is always good! If you stay here, telegraph to the paying teller at Virginia to wire me it is O. K., and then I'll cash it myself. I want to send a remittance down to San Francisco. I have the gold here." By a hazard of fate the night operator had worked this very dispatch through before the lines of the "101" were closed around the two cities.

There were so many thoughts chasing each other through the borderer's brain that he could not sleep. In vain he tried the comfort of his cigar case and pocket flask. Loud colloquy, the noise of galloping hoofs, and a growing excitement below, worried him until he fell asleep by mere exhaustion of his nervous forces. He had moved his cot bed away from the windows, barricaded the door with pieces of the furniture, and reconnoitered the easy descent to the stable yard. By his side lay his own heavy Colt revolver, and also a pocket edition of "Colt on Self-Defense." It had flashed over him that the sifting of the wheat and chaff might have commenced at last! That the sheared sheep had decided to trample down the goats, and that the telegraph poles might be decorated with their unnatural fruit, so common to the domains of Judge Lynch. "Thank God, I am not openly identified with Steve," was Wyman's only grain of comfort in these ugly night reflections. As he closed his eyes, true to the callous

egoism of his shallow nature, Wyman murmured, "I wonder if the check will go through all right." Selfish to the last!

Morning brought with it several matters of more than passing interest to the "surviving partner." The news that only the mails and necessary official travelers were allowed to enter Virginia City, and a dispatch from the paying teller of Wells, Fargo & Co. that the check "properly endorsed" was "good." Both these things excited Wyman, and it was late in the afternoon when he learned, through the personal telegram of the hotel keeper, that Steven Berard was not at the Golden Eagle. "Not here; town in uproar; Vigilantes in charge," were the ominous words. And Steven! Where was he?

All that day and night, Frederick Wyman deceived himself with the false hope that Steve Berard had been warned away by his attendant dæmon, and was lurking in safety until the sudden storm would blow over Before the Gold Hill agency of the great money monopoly of the Pacific coast closed its doors that day, Frederick Wyman saw his ten thousand dollars deposited in the hotel safe in two sealed bags. "I shall stay with you here for some little time," he remarked, with that lofty air which the possession of the "coin of the realm" always imparts.

Fred Wyman saw at once that he was the object of some lingering suspicion at Gold Hill. His presence with Steve Berard had been noted, and he was without the pale of the sympathy of the crafty barkeeper. For, Berard had lightly remarked: "A good fellow, private friend of mine, can't trust him, for he's got no nerve. Besides, he's not square with the sporting men." So, all of Wyman's queries were baffled, until the liquor seller gruffly turned at last and wearied out, remarked: "Find out for yourself! I'm not an intelligence office."

Wyman grew ominously restless at heart. "I am safe at any rate," mused the man of the "Mariquita." "I've got money enough for a year. Steve will surely find the way out, even if they have trapped him in Virginia. He's 'cuter than a coyote."

Alas! "The pitcher had gone too often to the well." That night, while Frederick Wyman pored over a dog-eared copy of the "Count of Monte Cristo" he had picked up, Steven Berard was lying hidden in a little "dug-out," hollowed under the floor of his sporting friend's cabin. A couple of mutely faithful Piute squaws watched the cabin and barn where, in a "lean-to" shed, the graceful "Strideaway" was hidden among a dozen tethered mules. There were three other men hidden there and, though armed, they lay breathless in their concealment, as a sudden domiciliary visit of the "Vigilantes" drew out nothing from the poor Indian women, whose vacant eyes only stared in wonder at the armed intruders. A sortie of one of the women before nightfall, disclosed the ugly fact that five or six swaying forms dangled from convenient poles or trustworthy timbers around town. The dance halls, gambling houses, and Paphian resorts were all shrouded in darkness. As for "the fraternity," the places where "their feet were beautiful on the mountains, knew them no more."

The Indian spy could not divine that some fifty of the "ungodly" were then herded as prisoners in a strong powder magazine, under a heavy guard; that the gambling houses had been wrecked, and, alas! the patent "faro box" of Steven Berard was a secret no longer! Though he did not "materialize," there were murmurs, loud and deep, among those who had connected the personal "dealing" of Berard with their recent losses, thus violating the friendly fluctuations of the wavering smiles of the "painted ladies." Several of the "reformers" had "gone broke" recently

in an illogical manner. Alas! The social prominence of Berard, his haughty parade of the "trotter," the swell "turn out," the mouse-eyed French "Madame," all this was an incentive to his capture. And, the crooked faro dealing!

"See here!" said White-headed Steve, at last, as he twisted his cramped limbs around. "I'm not going to stay in this damned hole to freeze to death. They could easily burn us out. We would be shot like dogs here if caught. I will try a straight run for it."

"For God's sake," whispered "Hell-fire Hennessey," so baptized from his favorite "three star" tipple. "They'll get your scalp sure, Steve. Better lay low and take the chances here. Ye were always popular with the boys, maybe they won't hang you."

"We owe this all to that crazy brute 'Brown,'" growled "Deaf Burke," the facial counterpart of that celebrated pugilist. A unanimous explosion of triplicate curses, deep if not loud, accentuated this true remark. At that moment, it was a matter of utter indifference to Brown himself, for the usually inoffensive Mr. Henry Van Sicle had emptied both barrels of a heavily loaded shotgun into the desperado as he rode into a stable, still stupid from the effects of the debauch, in which he had killed a stranger without a single flash of memory following the act. He had led his own slayer on to the act by a too prophetic remark, as to "one or the other being laid out when they next met." Mr. Brown's last remark, "He's got me!" was perfectly useless.! It "lagged superfluous" in the memory of his fellow citizens, who thought of the lengthened mortuary caravan, twenty-six, or more, who had preceded "Brown," as the result of his own misdirected energy.

While the three hidden sports "trifled with" his name and fame, Brown was sleeping far away from his fathers,

in one of the unknown, unmarked graves of western America. To-day they hide the dust of those who "painted the town red," in their never returning "halcyon days."

It was at four o'clock in the still morning that "White-headed Steve" crept from his chilly place of concealment in the dark. A few hurried words of adieu, a gripping of blood-stained hands, and he was gone. The warm-hearted Hennessey had thrust his brawny fist out of the dug-out as Steve stretched his cramped limbs.

"Take my pistol, old boy. Ye may need it!" the generous Celt huskily cried.

"You're a good fellow, Mike, but I don't want it. I'm fixed," and only the whisper, "So long, boys, take care of yourselves," reached them, as Berard crawled to the stable through the darkest shadows. His saddle and bridle, hidden in the straw, were easily reached. A familiar hand laid on "Strideaway's" glossy neck quieted her antics.

The four men listening under the cabin floor only heard the light spring as if of a panther's feet, as the blood mare daintily picked her way out of the icy stable yard. Riding lightly, with no needless weight, Steven Berard slipped his huge dragoon revolver around to the front. His "navy" was thrust in his breast, and a score of loose cartridges were in the pockets of his shooting coat. Beyond a flask and a few cigars, the only other weight he carried was the packet of papers rifled from the dead body of the luckless Devereux.

He caught a gleam from his costly diamond rings as he swung himself into the saddle. "Shall I throw them away?" He smiled faintly, "Here goes for luck!" and, then, he boldly rode out into the silent cross streets. "I can get down on the bench below the mines, slip through Grizzly Cañon, and skirt the Carson river to the north and west. These fellows will be all watching on the Gold Hill

road and the big streets." Lightly springing aside from the scattered boulders, the thoroughbred dropped nimbly down the cross street to the bench below the town. A ten minutes' fast trot along a well-known bare spot brought the intrepid fugitive to the entrance of lonely Grizzly Cañon. There, across his path, sweeping down from its parent vein, the river fragments of the mother "lead" lay, hiding the treasures of the virgin "Mariquita."

"I have fooled them," he thought, as he gathered up his reins. "I've now got a dead thing. I can write to Wyman. He will let the mine lie, and I'll come back when this thing blows over, and dig out all that fat stuff hidden here." The man's eyes, keen as a Comanche's, were peering out into the gloom, and his hand was closed on his heavy revolver, carried cocked and at a poise. The blood mare threw up her graceful head wildly with a snort, as two dark figures rose suddenly up, crying, "Halt! Halt!"

The maddened racer dashed down the pass as Steve Berard fired quickly right and left, point blank into the faces of the men, now almost at the mare's head! A groan followed him down the echoing cañon. He turned with a shout of mocking triumph, as he swept around the narrowing bend of the gorge below. Into the full light of a bonfire blazing before the deserted cabin of Robert Devereux, Steven Berard galloped, blinded by the lurid flash. There were sudden, hurrying forms. A deafening volley from shotguns and rifles rang out. When the gallant mare sank down on the stony sward, throwing her head from side to side in her dying agonies, her desperate master lay crushed to the ground under her, with his "Colt's dragoon" still clenched in the bony hand, where the gambler's diamonds flashed back the light of the pine wood torches.

"Who is it?" yelled a voice. "It's Steve Berard himself. And, by God! boys, he died game." Andy Bowen with a sigh dropped the butt of the heavy ducking gun he carried, and his first thought was a hope that the sixteen buckshot in each barrel he had fixed had not helped the general fusillade. The startled mountain owls fled away affrighted and the wailing night winds bore away the last words. "Died game!" "Died game!"

So, a half hour later, Berard lay cold in death on the bunk in the cabin, where Robert Devereux had often dreamed of the locked up wealth of the "Mariquita." Opposite him, slept the guard who had fallen under the gambler's unerring aim at the head of Grizzly Cañon. In the passionless waxen calm of the two faces, no one could trace the enmity which had cut them off in the very prime of young manhood. With limp, hanging arms, there was naught to tell of the difference between the reformer and the social outlaw. It was all the same at last. It mattered not, "If this were Bill or that were Joe,"—they divided the personal sovreignty of royal Death!

Andy Bowen gazed long at the stern face of "White-headed Steve." With a sudden impulse, he covered it with a handkerchief. It was to blot out the appealing memories of old days when they had "called the turn" or "bet on the cases" together—Comrades once. "He was a game sport," softly remarked big Andy. "And a determined little cuss!" The sigh which Andy breathed was the only tribute to the departed, save a sudden heart spasm of the mouse eyed "Madame," when the news reached her later, in her own hiding place; "Ah-h-h! Cesbrigands! Le pauvre Steve! Il me trâitait toujours en prince."

The first stage after the interdict of the "101" was lifted, bore Frederick Wyman back to Virginia City. He was without news of the "threshing out" of the human

straw, and the continued silence of Steven Berard was most ominous. Keenly conscious of his own endangered position, Wyman kept his eyes to the front all the while, as the other stage passengers exchanged many rumors. A Sunday silence reigned in the three horizontal streets of Virginia City, as the stage swept up to the "Golden Eagle," where the "local" line always left its passengers. But for the puffing of the steam mills down on the Comstock, and a few loitering knots of men on side streets, the town seemed bodily deserted. For no man knew where the scorpion lash of the "101" would strike in its next fall. It was impossible for Wyman to ignore the furtive signals of big "Andy Bowen," as he caught sight of Wyman's mechanically composed countenance.

"Get yer room, quick, my boy, I want to talk to ye in private," said Bowen, as Fred Wyman registered his name prominently, as of "Gold Hill."

Mean at heart, he was now a not innocent Peter, and most desirous of denying the dangerous man who had been his financial savior. "Send me up a bottle of the best whisky and some good cigars," was the new made capitalist's order, as he followed a frightened-looking negro to his room. Reform seemed to have lowered the spirits of all the dwellers on Mount Davidson! The question, "Who next?" shook many a burdened conscience. Aware of a violent purgation of the long-suffering community, still Wyman was astonished at the funereal stillness of the gay town.

When Andy Bowen deposited his giant bulk in a corner of Wyman's bed, he remarked, "Ye've been away some time?" with an awkward preparatory flourish.

Wyman, eager and excited, broke in, "Where's Steve, now? Is he all right?"

Andy gazed curiously at the young man, and, reaching

for the bottle, poured out a liberal reflection. "As to whar he is now, I kin tell ye. There's about ten tons of quartz layin' on him down there in the cañon by yer old cabin. Them coyotes finished off that thousand-dollar horse of his, and they were sinkin' a shaft after poor Steve, when we piled them rocks on him. As to his bein' all right, that there's a matter of theological opinion! I hev my own doubts! An' poor Steve can't tell us! Fur I stood by, when he an' that game mare came thrashin' down in a bunch, both of 'em dead as door nails. Steve died as game as a Pawnee brave."

Fred Wyman staggered, for he had sprung to his feet. The ashen pallor of his face and his trembling lips proved again that fatal "lack of nerve," so objectionable in the eyes of the late Steven Berard.

"What killed him?" faltered Wyman.

"About a dozen shotguns an' rifles blazin' away bang at ten paces," coolly answered Andy, as he reached out for a cigar. Crossing his legs, Mr. Bowen apologetically remarked: "You see, Wyman, the boys were bit pretty hard by that double-decked fan box speculation of Steve's, and they all had it in for him. I'm on the Executive Committee, an' I give you my word we was watching the cañon for a run out of some of the other sports who were in hiding. Poor Steve! He run right into a hornets' nest, but he died game as a wild cat. He just bored Hank Duffy plum through the heart, at the head of the gully!"

Wyman's eyes were gloomily fixed on the floor. "Who looked out for him and buried him and all that?" the young borderer queried, for he was anxious to know of the whereabouts of that contract. "I am the only human being left, who knows the secret of the 'Mariquita,' I wonder if Steve talked to old Holman. Probably not." So the young man quickly ran over the chances.

Andy Bowen, with some pride, slowly said as he rose: "We all did the square thing by him. As I knowed him best, the boys left it to me to bury him. I have turned in his saddle and bridle, his shooting arms and his watch, chain and rings to the Public Administrator here. By the way," and the great hulking fellow fumbled in his blanket coat, "there was a bundle of old mining papers, too, and I saw yer name. He had them hid in an inside breast pocket. There was a woman's picture an' an old letter or two from New Orleans. I left them things with him, and they're lying where he carried them always, on his breast; only it's a cold deal for poor Steve, for he's played his last hand out. Now, I've got to go and report. We're goin' to escort all the bummers out of these yere corporate limits. That's why ye see the burg so Sunday-like. We are going in for a virtuous life, you bet."

"Come around to-night here, and talk things over," urged Wyman whose fingers twitched convulsively as he fingered the bundle of papers.

"I will, boy," good-humoredly said Andy, over his parting glass; "if they don't send me off on this yere escort duty. I don't want to go. I've done enough and, besides, I'm a heavy rider. Don't you be afeard to show yourself in town. Your name came up on the 'fancy list,' and a dozen of us all spoke up and said you were a dead square honest miner."

"Thank you, Andy," cried Wyman; "I'll do you a good turn, some day."

"Whar's yer partner?" called out Andy as he turned at the stairs. "Don't see him round any more."

"Oh! He went over the ridge. He may not come back. I may buy him out," replied Wyman with Ananias' dexterity. "He's too delicate for hard work."

"That fool will soon give the whole town this last in-

vention of mine," mused Frederick Wyman, as he locked the door and spread out the papers. He sprang up in delight as he read them. "Safe at last!" he cried in glee.

Two hours later, the "surviving partner" walked briskly to the nearest stable, and then rode down to the "Mariquita" on a hired mustang. As he had expected, no one now lingered near the deserted shaft or the neglected tunnel, from which an icy rill of spring thaw was flowing. "It's all right," the lonely man whispered to himself. Steve's watcher was frightened away. He dared not descend the cañon to where poor old Captain Johnson watched the few hundred dollars worth of rough winter outfit left in the cabin. No! For the pale, accusing shade of Robert Devereux lingered by that creaking door. A stone's throw from the porch, the piled gray rocks marked where the bold disciple of Fortuna lay cold in death, with the picture of that unknown, still beloved, woman in far away New Orleans, moldering on his dauntless heart, now stilled forever.

Wyman rode smartly back to the Golden Eagle. In his comfortable room, cheerful with its light and blazing fire, he dreamed of the golden future, as the blue wreaths of his cigar rose over him. "It's the devil's own luck," he softly chuckled. "Steve intended to hold these old papers of Devereux's over me. He must have robbed that poor fellow's body."

Wyman rose and steadied "that shaky nerve" with a good pull at the bottle. "There's a couple of letters, too, from his wife. By Heavens! I will go down to San Francisco, myself. Her address is on one of the letters. Ah!" he paused; "I must think. Now, I will trust no one. I need no one. I will administer upon the estate; yes, quietly, and distribute it to myself. She probably does not even know the name of the 'Mariquita.' There's a whole lot of

other locations. I will let this blow quietly over. But I'll build a new cabin, house the main shaft over, bulkhead up the tunnel, and open the mine next winter, with Steve's money. I have got my contract back!" And the ungrateful scoundrel's nerve was steadier, as, with a sly smile, he raised his glass: "Here's to you, Steve! My Partner Steve!"

CHAPTER IV.

Jim the Penman.

A week after the return of Mr. Frederick Wyman from Gold Hill, the "101" had restored the normal balance of social and business life upon the Comstock Lode. The leading citizens of business importance backing the authorities, at last checked the sweeping orders of the "101." For, strange to say, Reform was now beginning to outrun itself, and personal spleen was already hinted at. The discovery of several outlying mining districts also drew away many of the adventurous. The sports, warned away, spread afar the news of the "virtuous spasm," and the weary were at rest—for indeed the wicked ceased to trouble. The daily consumption of liquor was only that good steady thirst, which never rose now to the frenzy of the "jamboree." Even Andy Bowen repented his undue prominence, and sought a temporary obscurity in prospecting trips to Inyo, Mono, Reese River, Eureka and other shadowy localities.

The sole owner of the Mariquita, after much self-commune, decided to hurry slowly. He limited his improvements to a substantial structure covering the shaft and a cheap cabin with the bulkhead at the mouth of the tunnel. Fortunate in securing a stolid Swedish emigrant as watchman, Wyman felt that his new cabin mate was harmless, as he could not chatter. To ease off the disappearance of Devereux, the sly plotter still allowed "Captain Johnson" to remain in charge of the old headquarters. Escorted by his Scandinavian man-at-arms, Wyman removed the tools, and left the old Indian to the heirship of the food and rude household outfit. But once did he him-

self enter the cabin, and then, the appealing eyes of the old Piute soon drove him out with a quickly beating heart; for, pointing to the bunk of the unreturning partner, the poor aborigine, in sign language and broken Spanish, sought for news of his absent benefactor.

Wyman paced the floor of his new den long that night. For prudential reasons he had withdrawn his golden deposit from the hostelry at Gold Hill. It was his turn now to triumph over the once haughty barkeeper, who sought for news of the ultimate adjustment of the estate of the late Steven Berard. "Find out for yourself," remarked Wyman. "He's as near to you as he is to me."

After returning from Grizzly Cañon, Wyman was sharply questioned at the postoffice by the incumbent, a man of some little discernment. "Look here, there are a lot of unclaimed letters here now for your partner Devereux. Will you take them or shall I send them on East to the dead letter office?" Frederick winced as he answered, "I can't tell. He started for San Francisco and was to send me his address. We have only left now, in common, some joint locations where we used each other's names. He was a queer, uncertain sort of a chap, and he may have got tired and thrown up the sponge."

But, calm as was his face when he left the office, Wyman was startled. He knew that several pleading letters from the anxious wife addressed to him were not yet answered. "The king-pin of the whole thing now is old man Holman. If this woman would stir up a row there, I might lose all." And yet, Wyman dared not visit the den of the old Mormon. Fear restrained him!

"This old brute may fear to be mixed up in the doings of the Brown and Berard gang. If I set my foot on his stolen domain, he might put me quietly out of the way, for his own safety. I've got to chance it. She will get tired of writing."

It was near daylight when Wyman decided upon his final course. "I'll keep quiet, ignore all, and watch the mine for a season. I have money enough, and then, in the spring, I can put up a little arrastra, and grind out enough to build a ten-stamp mill. But—the title, the title! I must cover myself in some way. Possession is one thing. If this development continues, I may yet be forced to show my hand."

And then, an uneasy desire to know also of the fate of Devereux's wife and child began to gnaw at his heart. "Can I risk a secret trip to San Francisco? I might carefully shadow this woman and see what her present surroundings are." And yet, he did not wish to visit the Panther of the Golden Gates until he had grasped Fortune's wheel so firmly that he should be borne up into those circles of luxury which, open to the millionaire owner of the "Mariquita," seen but dimly as yet in his rosy dreams, were as yet a "terra incognita," to the poor prospector who watched every flutter now of the faintly upheld "Stars and Bars," with less enthusiasm. He had fashioned out in his mind a successful western man. In the keen, fresh intelligence of his unjaded youth, the days of Gettysburg and Vicksburg had tolled the knell of the confederacy for him. "The rebs will never make that Washington trip now," he sighed. Frederick Wyman gave up at last the verification of Mr. Robert Toombs' dream of "hearing the roll of his slaves called under the Bunker Hill monument."

"It was a little premature, this war," mused Wyman. "I must drift in with the victorious northern sentiment here. Non-committal now, I can come out 'truly loyal' later." Again, that coarse, sensual sneer on the pleasure-loving lips. "I will wait here for a few months in quiet. If I do not hear further from this woman, I can then slip down to San Francisco and have a light prospecting mill,

or a set of 'arrastra' irons sent up here. Then, in a few months, I can take out enough gold to set me up for good, like a gentleman. But, no partners! I have had enough partners." Over his mind came the prophetic visions of the future. "I will show them what a millionaire should be! These double assays can not lie. And the experienced Steve Berard would not have thrown ten thousand dollars in good gold 'chinks' away on me for nothing."

"By God! what a windfall of luck this reform interlude was for me. It squared all the accounts at once." The young man lightly filliped his ringing glass. "If I have no nerve, Mr. Berard, I am at least a pretty good 'stayer.' I have all the cards, and the deal is mine. Now, to play my own lone hand against the world."

He cast up his resources carefully. He had over nine thousand dollars in yellow "twenties" safely hidden. His eager mind returned to the snug boxes of thirty thousand dollars each, neatly ranged behind the counters of Wells, Fargo & Co. Those invincible battalions of Plutus. "That's the stuff to make men bow, and—and women smile," he murmured, and his throat grew warm with a rising flush of the anticipated pleasures of the future. "Only—only, never to lose my head!"

Wyman had stumbled upon an axiomatic self-counsel. Though no magic introspection had given him the clue to his real nature, he was dimly conscious that the heart would not trouble him much. The high tide of life flushed his veins, and at the gates of his future two nymphs with longing eyes waited. Their names were Pleasure and Desire. He had marked the clumsy excesses of the few prosperous men whom he had seen on the Comstock. The only mark of their higher standing seemed to him to be a noisy assumption, a floundering about as of clumsy beetles fallen into honey. A more prolonged

drunk, a little more reckless gambling, a few lurid flashes of display, these were the only realizations of millionaire eminence so far on the Comstock. An inflammation in colored vestments, an efflorescence of clustered diamonds, cable chains and huge watches; and a peculiar desire to meddle with other men's womenkind; these all seemed strange symptoms.

Frederick Wyman raised his eyes to that other world, the world of High Life, in which he would soon shine with the veiled romance of a Claude Melnotte—the mysterious power of a Monte Cristo. "Men shall fear me, women shall be under my feet. The golden bell will open their closed hearts!" And, far away in Fancy's glass, he saw himself a crowned god, with a background of town house, villa, shooting box, club honors, horses, yachts and a modish circle. "One must be a gentleman born, to show life to these fellows, but I will do it in style. The man who will rule Virginia City must be silent, pitiless, alert, active! He must sway the Stock Board, have standing abroad, social and financial. Politicians and journalists must woo his friendship, and his appearance in society must be that of one of Nature's noblemen. Yes, the Mariquita is the golden lever. Then, a joint control in San Francisco and Virginia mining circles, a name in New York, Washington, Paris, London."

The sudden sputter and extinguishment of the miner's adamantine "sixes" which lit up the cabin of the millionaire "in futuro," brought him to his bunk in a sudden recall to the present. "But, there's no nonsense," he soliloquized as he drew off his heavy boots. "The whole thing is to be mine, and it now lies buried there, in the Mariquita."

When Wyman awoke the next day, his mind was alert and active. Not even the gloomy realism of a breakfast

of bacon, beans, black coffee and saleratus biscuits, eased down by golden syrup, could depress him. He good-humoredly watched his one henchman, the Swede, who ate manfully of the provender, and thanked the God of the Swedes that it was there. The air was sweet and balmy. Birds eschewed the basalt crags of Mount Davidson, for obvious reasons. But, faint patches of green were now everywhere visible, for the thousands of animals and hundreds of pack trains had carried the barley and oats of California, by fortuitous accident, far over the Sierras. The breeze sweeping from far silvery Tahoe was redolent of fir and balsam. The sunlight gleamed even kindly on the stony cuirass of the old mountain giant.

"Can I trust this chap?" mused Wyman. "He does not talk, but he may think in his own cursed lingo."

An hour spent while sunning himself over a repeated cigar as he gazed at his mine lying there, brought all Wyman's plans to a head. "I can fix up this tunnel and shaft, myself, so that no one can ever get near the hidden ore. I can leave such débris and tell-tale secret marks, that a glance will show me that all is well—that nothing has been disturbed. Patience, silence, and only a few months more waiting. If the confederacy "caves in" this fall, there will be a great influx to the Pacific here next year. Speculation will boom, for then the Yankee "shin-plaster" money will soon flow out here. I am safe now, and I will be safer still in three months. But I must get a good written title on record in some way. There's the rub, to make all the papers sure. There's no hurry, but I must get a clear chain of recorded title from Devereux. It could be easily done now, while all is yet unsettled, while no one knows of his death."

He sat down on a huge boulder and watched the fleecy clouds sailing high over the jagged peaks of the gray

mountains over him. "I have no friend, no one to help me, and also, no enemies to bother me. All that I can do is to hide this thing from everyone in Devereux's interest. If I only had some one to help me—to play off Devereux!"

He sprang up. A sudden thought had enlivened the brooding darkness of his mind. "Yes, I can do it away from here, but who am I to get to help me? It must be some safe outsider. And, I ought to patch this thing up, so that if his wife makes me any trouble I have something to show. If I go down to San Francisco I must be ready to bamboozle her some way. It will not do to try and buy her out. Who ever knew a woman to be manageable about signing a paper? And, it would also admit that she had some rights. If there's a child left, a minor child, that thing might follow me. If I could only make that bill of sale of his for one quarter legally cover the other three-quarters—the whole,—but it is properly recorded. A later transfer! Yes, of the balance, before the wife or her representatives can ever see me. For, whatever I do, I must stick to it through thick and thin. To hold the 'Mariquita' now, when no one wants it, is very easy, but when she smiles out on the world, there's a difference. I must set my house in order. There's one good thing. There have been three or four sets of Recorders and Clerks since I registered my first bill of sale. No one up there now knows either me or Devereux. By Jove! I'll go up to town and take a look at the situation.

High noon found Mr. Frederick Wyman seated at the table of the Golden Eagle, after a very guarded visit to the new Recorder's office. The spasm of virtue which had so markedly shortened the expectations of life of a score of "sports," and brought woe to the decôlleté bosoms of the Paphian nymphs of the burg, had also wafted the

records of the "lead" from their saloon domicile to a tiny office now sacred to themselves. For three days after the "101" episode, the men avoided the gin palaces, for yet other three days, they slipped in at the back door; for yet other clouded days, they dodged in at side doors, but now, the average citizen wandered in with a shameless brow and quenched his thirst, regardless of "les moeurs publiques."

The crown of Virtue sat most uneasily on the head of fair young Virginia City, the wild mountain nymph, and even now it had tilted a bit sideways. The purple mustached fraternity were not unrepresented, though the voice of the turtle was a still small voice. Gleaming eyes again shone out as fixed stars, along "C" street and "I" street, behind unmistakable zinc plaques, freshly engraved, "Coralie," "Mamie," "Cleopatra," et id omne genus. There were no swans in the air, but Venus Victrix, peeping out, transfixed the passer-by with her alas! too prominent charms and painted siren smile, from the semi-shelter of diaphanous curtains. The minions of order were not there to spy out the rosy land where the flag of sin still gaily fluttered in the wooing spring breeze. As Andy Bowen remarked vaguely, "Things seem to be coming around all right!"

Wyman met him as he emerged from the office of the Recorder, where an alert man of thirty was neatly extending the verbiage of a pile of new transfers in several freshly prepared books. The superior air of this new functionary at once struck the owner of the "Mariquita."

"Is that the new Recorder?" carelessly asked Wyman, as he led Andy out of the "Stonewall Jackson" saloon after a mighty drink—a "housewarmer," the great giant termed it, as he spoke of his drinkless exile in his long trip afield.

"That chap is a new arrival, sir," cried big Andy. "And all the front name he's got is 'Jim the Penman.' He's a dandy scribe, that's what he is, and our local business is increasing, so that the Recorder has two or three extra fellows at the records. But, this fellow is the boss. I saw him the other night write down a half-dozen fellows' names on a bet, three times each, mixing them with a slip written at the same time, by themselves. An outsider marked all the real ones and the fellows were all stuck for the drinks for the crowd on their own mistakes. He's an eastern chap, too, and a right good fellow."

Frederick Wyman carried off only a part of Andy Bowen's harangue, and yet, he turned back to gaze again at the cool self-possessed stranger whose flying fingers were the wonder of the clumsy Nevadans. "How did he get here? Is he an outcast?" was Wyman's last remark, a quick suggestion of his own private needs.

"Oh! No! He seems all right. He was in the navy somewhere East, and had to give up the sea. Looks consumptive. I guess he came out here for a change of air."

Andy sauntered away, leaving the sly Wyman standing lost in thought. The "change of air" impressed him as the cabalistic letters—"G. T. T."—on the door of the hidden skeleton cupboard for years indicated that the absent owner thereof had "Gone To Texas!" Whether crime, woman, dissipation or heartbreak sent Mr. James Walter Hooper over to Washoe, his contemporaries did not know, and cared still less to ask; for the mental storehouses for the local euphemistic lies were overcrowded.

"Faith, Hope and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity." This wholesome truth was verified among the ungodly, for an absence of Faith in their shadowy biographies, was more than atoned for by the mantle Charity, which left each man's past to mock him alone, with its

unrevealed ghastliness. Any story was acceptable, provided like a duelists' sword that it was of the right length.

Mr. Wyman, secret capitalist and budding aristocrat, did not return to his dinner of corned beef, cabbage, potatoes au naturel, and canned peaches. He lingered at the Golden Eagle for a swell dinner. A chance meeting in the gloaming with Andy Bowen favored the saturnine Wyman with the acquaintance of Mr. James Walter Hooper. To the astonishment of the casual loungers, in a week, the penman was an inmate of Wyman's neat cabin at the head of Grizzly Cañon.

"Ye see," dilated Patsey Casey, the gay Ganymede of the Golden Eagle bar; "they're both high-toned loike, slick up on Sundays, and do the style of a Lord Lieutenant. They are the two bloods of the Comstock, and I suspect aych of them of having been kicked out of some college or another. We're proud of them, and they make a fine show."

But, Patsey Casey, dealer in hell-fire poisons, was not gifted with the "higher light." Wyman, desiring to carefully guard his own personal secrets, studiously held aloof from all the little cliques of the streets. He was now watching for the turn of the tide in every way, and his breath often came quickly as he realized how his careless intimacy with Steve Berard might have ended in his tasselling a telegraph pole. In truth, it was only his fatal lack of cool, ready, reliable nerve that had caused Berard to abandon the hope of making Wyman a useful brother of the green cloth. Nimble, sly, plausible, taking, in his manners, and practicable, he was not yet entirely master of himself. His vulgarly timid nature demanded one foot on solid ground before he could play the brave man.

Intuitively, Wyman felt that this self-contained and accomplished stranger might be useful to him later. It was

nearly a month after they had shared the same roof shelter before Hooper revealed even a part of his life story. His air of semi-discipline, his neat manner, and ready aplomb bore out the navy story. Busied daily in his copyist labors, he was very companionable with Wyman, for both of them shunned the grosser pleasures of the tawdry streets. Wyman's cold economy was born of ambition and prudent fear; the other man's of necessity.

Hooper bore his thirty years very jauntily, and fresh, blonde and steady-eyed, he betrayed no nervous anxiety save in his haunting the postoffice for letters which never came. His smooth brow was unruffled, but, his waiting look impressed even the watchful Wyman. The firm lips, hidden with a sweeping mustache, still guarded the secrets of his past, and such modest wardrobe as he had, was of the order of the children of fashion. His personal baggage was most shadowy, and yet, with a quiet dignity, he gently declined Wyman's offer of money assistance.

"I will save enough to get me over to San Francisco, and then, I will get a position in some one of the merchant steamer lines. I detest these low brutes. I have always handled money, not men of this calibre. I would be entirely useless here."

The guarded silence of the facile stranger visitor was still unbroken when two months later he quietly said to Wyman, "I am going down to the Bay;" for, the long looked for letter had at last arrived.

Mr. Frederick Wyman started at the sudden announcement, for a long cherished plan had slowly matured in his mind. Cold and egoistic, he feared to trust to any human being. He had now finished all his labors of safety around the mine and, the desire to fathom the history of the dead Devereux's widow, the pressing need to set up his legal title before opening the hidden mine, now weighed on him.

"By Heaven! I must soon get machinery on this lead and, I do not dare yet to show my hand."

He was now familiar with all of Hooper's clerical dexterity. "I only showed these grinning fools what I could do, as a means of getting temporary work," said Jim the Penman, "but, I'm ready for the road now, and I would not stay here for any ordinary temptation." The color flamed in his face. It was a singular visage. A peculiar glittering crafty twinkle of the eyes, or affected carriage of the stylish head, an aristocratic over-loading with that obtrusive element, the nose, gave him the air of a petit mâitre. His ceremonial and lisping manner set up an invincible barrier between him and the hairy giants of the sledge and drill.

Wyman breathed hard as he heard the sudden announcement. He knew now that in all the ways of the world which he longed to conquer. Hooper was a Past Grand Master, where he was as yet, only a tyro. He knew that a steel spring nerve lurked behind the stranger's folded veil. In his dreams, he had looked to this man as a possible tool. That idea had now vanished. But, could he obtain his help in any way? Fearing to break the ice, he had so far remained quiet. "He might have fixed up those records for me," thought Wyman, with a pang at heart. He merely waited for an opening, as he said: "I'm sorry to lose you, I hope to meet you soon in San Francisco. What takes you down there, some business certainly?

Jim the Penman gazed steadily at the younger man. "You've been very kind to me Wyman. I don't mind telling you. It was a woman sent me out here to this devilish stone quarry, and it's a woman, the same woman, who takes me away." His eyes gleamed with that passion which lights up the windows of the lost soul showing the never-dying fire within.

"The same woman?" cautiously queried Wyman.

"Yes, the very same! She's coming out on the steamer. I had to leave her in New York, but now it's different." And, the elegant and impassive James Walter Hooper then paced the floor with the springy tread of a panther. For, in his veins was burning the subtle philtre of a love which had gnawed into his very soul, and eaten up in its shriveling flames, all that he ever knew of the paltry bird-cage meshes we call principle or honor. When did they ever avail against "Her bright smile?" The one who comes to craze, to dazzle, to rule in imperious wickedness, or roving fancy.

"When do you go down?" continued Wyman, his eyes gleaming.

"To-morrow, I will get my poor wages. I take to-morrow night's stage to Reno," said the penman.

"I'll go on as far as Truckee with you," cried Wyman, "I have some business over there."

"It's my last chance," he thought, under his breath; and then, Hooper's last remarks gave him the needed clue. The way was open at last. "Yes, he can do what he wants to safely there, over the line, in California."

All that night, Wyman watched the regular breathing of the man who evidently was dreaming of a reunion of passionate love, a love which never stopped to dally in its flood of burning feeling with the foolish trammels of guilt or innocence. For, what is guilt when the one bosom of the world pillows a lover's head? "Some wandering star who has forgotten her home orbit," sneered Frederick Wyman, who could not imagine why any woman should cross the tropics in search of Jim the Penman. "He is poor, but as sharp as a flash. Can it be some scheme? Counterfeiting? Some new modern swindle? No! In such cases, the preliminary money is ever forthcom-

ing. It may be that he ran away to escape a sudden personal vengeance or to save her name. Perhaps, there was a husband or a child to get rid of. But I must watch him, use him and a few hundred dollars might be a godsend to him now. Shall I risk it?"

Mr. James Walter Hooper had made several furtive character studies of his host during this stay. He mused as he watched Wyman. "This man is hiding something from the world. His pent-up nature is eager to burst through some trammels. What are they? What restrains him here? Young, plausible, active, unfettered, and yet, he lingers in an apparently aimless insincerity of purpose here. He is following me down to Truckee for a hidden reason. And, that same reason will at last unlock his tongue."

James Walter Hooper had watched many, many schemes of craft and chance before he was driven forth from the Brooklyn navy yard by the "angel of the flaming sword." "This boy, untried as he is, is smart—dangerous—a cold-hearted liar, and has already some direct path laid out to cut his way to success. It lies cut through the quivering hearts of some innocent sufferers. There is only one thing which will keep this fellow from becoming a notable human shark; it is his lack of nerve and the easy runway of that pleasure-loving chin. He is the sort of a chap to be 'laid by the heels' at last. But, God knows where he will drive on to. In fair weather, any fool can sail a yacht!"

As the two men clambered into the stage, in the hush of the next evening, Hooper narrowly observed his host and self-appointed traveling companion. Wyman's slender luggage indicated an early return. His face was untroubled, his air quietly expectant. Hooper cast a scornful glance at the bald, sterile, social wilderness of the shabby town, and he then trundled away over the hidden veins

below with no thought of the gnome-guarded golden veins founded in silvery buttresses. But as the stage swept around the last point, a ray of the setting sun lit up the gloomy gorge of the Grizzly Cañon. The eager air of Wyman's farewell glance stimulated Hooper's curiosity.

"Has this fellow a buried treasure down there? He seems so cool so confident, so indifferent to the future, and yet, he has neither associates nor backers. What underlies his strange serenity?" These unanswered questions yielded to memories which thrilled Hooper's heart to the throbbing core.

As the wheels revolved, Jim the Penman softly closed his eyes. He could see again Vinnie Hinton, as on that day, two years before, when she first entered the office of the Naval Paymaster at the Brooklyn Yards. The very first notes of her velvety voice cost him his peace of mind, and Uncle Sam, a new check book, for a quart of copying fluid baptized that open document, which figured so prominently later in Vinnie Hinton's rapidly enlarged social horizon. The disgraced fugitive could see once more the woman's flashing, wonderful brown eyes, with their two glistening spots, a resistless invitation, at once, a pleading and a snare. His heart leaped up madly, as he pressed his arm upon a crackling letter in his bosom. For, their life paths were again to run into one at the Golden Gate.

What mattered it if Paymaster Arthur Hallowell was now a not ornamental inmate of the Dry Tortugas prison, a man from whose shoulders the blue and gold had been stripped? The double event which made a great disbursing agent her slave, and his confidential man her humble man Friday, was a tribute to those quietly exerted fascinations which a lavish nature had given to the reckless, shy-eyed beauty, as a fatal dower. It had ruined several

others, before her velvet cheek glowed one shade deeper under the ardent glances of poor Arthur Hallowell, whose eyes now swept, hopelessly, the sapphire zone of the Caribbean.

Whether from a convict's standpoint, Vinnie Hinton was still the Queen of Arts and Hearts, Hooper knew not, but it was strangely true that very night the man in stripes, a dishonored officer, dreamed again of those splendid eyes, trembling with the unshed tears. The word "Embezzlement," coldly entered against the name of Arthur Hallowell, might have been properly followed by the uglier remark "Forgery," coupled with the patronymic of James Walter Hooper, the Paymaster's Chief Clerk.

"What a genius Vinnie is!" fondly mused Hooper that night at Reno. "No one but she would have had sense enough to burn up the extra warrant book and the check book. When poor Hallowell helped himself a little to the government funds, he never knew that I could follow him up with a better signed check than his own. I don't fancy that his bondsmen will ever find out how much we took, jointly and severally. I only wonder if Vinnie has kept an egg or two of the golden nest. The government is about two years behind the rebellion. The Auditor's and Treasury accounts are about two years behind the government. Long before my criminality can be traced, I will be either well placed in this world, high above any suspicion, or else eligibly located in another."

So it was, with a light heart, Mr. James Walter Hooper blew out his brief candle and dreamed of "working" San Francisco with the resistless and fascinating Vinnie "on joint account." "She must have some distinct ideas," was his last thought, "or else she would have con-

veniently forgotten poor Jim the Penman." Even in his freely indulged soliloquies, he avoided that brutally direct term "Jim the Forger." Luck had been with him so far, for his hasty flight from New York to save an appearance, as a witness of damning injury to the unfortunate Hallowell, was effected through a warm-hearted young brother officer. He had recognized the dainty touch of lovely Vinnie Hinton's jeweled hand in the instantaneous flitting, and the brief scrawl: "Burned all Arthur's books and things here at the New York Hotel; work your way out to San Francisco; I'll join you there. Send only address here to me; I'll bring you out all right yet!" The one key word she signed threw open the door of Memory to a spell which still held him trembling in silence at her feet—the Conqueror.

Mr. Frederick Wyman had been strangely abstracted during the ride, and the furtive watching of the ex-paymaster's clerk evolved no clue to his covert necessities. At Willows Cross Roads, the penman noted a sudden flush of interest, as Mr. Wyman joined eagerly in a general conversation based upon the sudden elevation of Elder Asa Holman to be a Bishop of the Mormon Church.

"Has he left here?" demanded Wyman carelessly of the hotelkeeper.

"Yes. Sold out all his ranch and stock to the stage company. Going to be sent either to Europe to drum up recruits for Brother Brigham, or else to found a new Mormon colony in Mexico. He's gone away already, and one or two of the old women alone, are left here packing up to follow him on to Salt Lake City. That old slyboots left here with a good two hundred thousand dollars in gold."

As the heavy stage lumbered along to its final destination at Truckee, Hooper began to feel a very warm curiosity in Wyman's future movements. There was a restless

glitter in his eyes, which denoted the working of his crafty brain.

"I am in a hurry to reach San Francisco," said Hooper, as the two men wandered away from the little hotel porch, on the star-lit night following their début at Truckee. Down in the gorge the river was dashing among its dark boulders, and the huge swaying pines sang the sad wailing song of the Sierras over them.

"I wish you would give me to-morrow here," finally remarked Wyman, as they raised their eyes out of the dark olive depths. "I will make it an object to you."

"Have you much business here? Are we over the State line?" casually remarked the penman.

"I think so! I must find out a notary. There must be one here. I've not been in this town before; but only passed through." Wyman had incautiously trapped himself.

The firm lips of Jimmy Hooper never quivered. "Wants to do a bit of private business. If I mistake not, it's a good investment for the future."

The two young men indulged in an earnest game of billiards till late, but the word "business" never crossed Wyman's lips till the golden sun had cleared the swaying forest giants the next day. It cost the borderer a final wrench at heart to approach the subject. "He will never come back to Virginia. And he will forget the names and all. I'll take the papers away at once."

Decided to take the final risk, the egoist timidly asked his own heart, "Will five hundred dollars be enough?" He was man enough to own that, possessed of Mr. Hooper's singular talent, he himself would have demanded more. But he ignored Mr. Hooper's total inability to discern just how much of the late Steve Berard's gold coin lay snugly buried behind a set of framing timbers of

the tunnel, where the stolid Swede was now watching that golden hearted virgin, the Mariquita.

Frederick Wyman was astir betimes the next morning. Before his companion had ceased to dream of the kaleidoscopic changes of fortune of Vinnie Hinton, the borderer had thoroughly explored the burg of Truckee.

"Yaas! it's a queer place!" said an early barkeeper, as the two men listened to the plumed quail piping in the theoretical streets of Truckee. "Just stumps enough cut out here, for the stage to get in and out. The river gives us water to blend our whisky, and the old hole burns up regularly every year when leaves are dry. You see we're in a regular basin here—a cup. Dern it! a fellow killed a a big grizzly bear in the town limits the other day, and them yellow panthers lug off every colt and calf around here. Notary public? Yes sir! Over there! Shake his door well. He was drunk last night. You'll find him a handy man. He's a tailor, barber, shoemaker, and Justice of the Peace, as well as the Postmaster and Insurance agent. He does a bit of real estate, too, but that's not his strong hold."

In a half hour, Mr. Wyman returned with the factotum, who, after three stiff drinks, explained a few details extracted from a very greasy copy of the Practice Act.

"Wait for me at your office, Squire," said Wyman, as he privately pledged the barkeeper to keep the "Squire" sober until after ten o'clock. "Then, you can turn the 'tremens' loose on him, for all I care," said Wyman, as they took a drink "on private account."

The homely hotel breakfast dispatched, Mr. Frederick Wyman affected such a fine air of easy unconcern, that, at last, Hooper came flatly to the point.

"What am I to do for you, Wyman?" he briskly said. "Now, the day is crawling on."

Shut up in a stifling little upper room, Wyman slowly produced several old papers, and a small assortment of antique stationery which he had picked up, bit by bit, at Virginia City. His hand still trembled with the bill of sale of one quarter of the "Mariquita," clutched in his eager grasp, when his lame and halting story was over.

The glittering blue eyes of James Walter Hooper were lazily fixed on a great gray squirrel capering gaily on a dry limb of a huge pine near. Gurgling water, the fresh morning breeze, a patch of bluest sky, arched with the forest monarchs, all the fine veiled harmony of nature, wooed the ex-clerk to a lonely stroll.

"Don't differentiate, my boy, out with it! Tell me what I can do for you! These papers are not worth a damn to you, unless verified. Who is going to do that?"

"You see," faltered Wyman, now in a close corner, "the fact is, Devereux was a rolling stone. He will never turn up again. No one knows him, and I only want to close my title. I hate to put in a whole season's work on the mine, and then be worried later."

"And, you want me to leap into the chasm for you, here?" Mr. Hooper was now very wide awake.

"I want the papers fixed up just as if Devereux himself were here," sullenly said the borderer.

"What sort of a chap is the Notary?" calmly said Hooper.

"He's over there now, half drunk, waiting for me," replied Wyman.

"How much loose money have you with you?" placidly continued Hooper.

"I have five hundred dollars in good twenties, if no one can tell the difference of these documents." Wyman sighed, and his face plead poverty.

"Go over there and keep that chap on a moving drunk,

but, just so sober that he can stick on his seal. You are sure we are now in California?" the Penman queried.

"There's an impression of his notarial seal!" cried Fred.

"All right! I'll be there in a jiffy. Stay! Give me all the dates you want, and the consideration."

Wyman, by hazard, put down ten dollars to be named in the deed, and the date of the uprising at Virginia, for the forged transfer of the three quarters of the Mariquita, still standing on the records as the property of one Robert Devereux. "They will remember that all was upside down then, at Virginia City, if any one ever looks it up, and it will explain his being over here, too. It all goes well with the idea of Devereux's final disappearance for California." Mr. Wyman was now very anxious to see the work of Jim the Penman, in its finished state.

"You take the gold over there along with you, and you'll get the documents when you pay the Notary his fees," coldly remarked Hooper. "Stay! The damned fool may ask me a question or so. Have you anything with you of the absent man's? Something to identify him?"

Wyman thrust a couple of envelopes hastily into his hand. "There's a couple of letters addressed to him. You can show those, if he asks you to prove your own identity."

And, while Wyman returned to stand guard over the Notary, Hooper, after a few moments practice and characterization study, deftly ran off the required full transfer. He left the date blank.

"That's a very neat job," said the Penman, as from his window he saw Wyman now ornamenting the narrow portico of the saloon where the Squire was holding forth on the great future of Truckee City. Some busy devil's suggestion caused the scribe to run off a penciled copy of

the two letters, even to the marks on the envelopes. "My friend Wyman," he smiled, as he indulged in his second morning appetizer. "There is more than five hundred dollars in this affair. Seed sowed by the wayside, and I can afford to wait. However, I've taken all there is in sight."

Ten minutes later, with semi-drunken gravity, the Notary objected to the blank date, and his own ignorance of the personality of the maker of the transfer, "Oh! Put in the date of our bargain!" said Wyman easily, and the false Devereux inscribed the date of the occultation of the "101."

"There, Mr. Notary, are my letters. I suppose that will satisfy you," remarked Hooper as he laid the envelopes, with the furtively copied letters, under the Squire's red nose.

"Certainly! Certainly! That's all right. Must however obey the Code," commented the official, as he finally affixed the notarial seal to the superbly executed forgery. The ink, the faded blue paper and every ear mark of the original document was there.

"Stay, Mr. Notary," briskly said Wyman, as he received his change for a twenty-dollar piece. "I wish also a certified copy. Take the fees out for that." And, Mr. Wyman did not grudge the twelve dollars which he parted with.

"You see, Devereux," laughed Wyman, as Hooper quietly gathered in his five hundred dollars in shining gold, "I will keep the original and send the certified copy up to Virginia City for record. It will only take you a few moments to run it off."

"This fellow Wyman is a bit smarter than I thought him," mused Hooper, as he good humoredly threw in another forgery of the document. "I suppose he has

some wildcat claim up there, which he would gladly use as a shadowy background to his cheap pretensions. This young tiger cub may grow to be a bit dangerous, when his teeth are longer, and so I'll keep an eye on him. It's very useful money to me now, this little windfall. I can prospect around and study Vinnie's game a little, before she has me at Hoodman's Blind, again. I wonder what it is now, Army or Navy?"

While Wyman, with assumed carelessness, sauntered over to have the copy certified, Hooper thought of all the bright-eyed harpies clustering around the disbursing officers of Uncle Sam. "Sixty-one, sixty two, sixty-three," had developed a brood of soft plumaged falcons who hovered very near the eagle so neatly graven on the official buttons; and, they all loved the crisp green treasury notes. "Ah! Vinnie! Vinnie! I suppose you have marked your game down already now; some successor to poor Hallowell." He never imagined that Vinnie Hinton, with a prophetic eye, saw the evolution of the "stock millionaire," the Pacific coaster, the bonanza baron, the freshest, coarsest, "greenest" of fortune's uplifted fools.

"If this run of luck keeps up out there, Aladdin's lamp was a baby's toy to what the flame of fortune may show these 'golden calves.'" The unwearied attention of several United States Marshals and secret service detectives caused Vinnie Hinton to find the New York Hotel a bit stuffy. "Westward the star," she gaily hummed as she flirted with the purser on the Atlantic, only to captivate his successor on the Pacific side. "I am all right now," laughed Vinnie, over a bottle of champagne under the sparkling skies of the Carribean. "For once, I am following the advice of a Bishop—the good Berkeley. But, I must have my Jimmie, he can turn the trick on these lumbering sons of a lucky star. I can't do it alone. He shall be my business man."

"Do you go right back to Virginia City?" questioned Hooper, as he found Wyman, amusing himself with completing the beastly drunkenness of the frontier official, now a silent reddened Silenus.

"Yes! My stage comes along at three o'clock," answered the now happy borderer.

"Wyman has some object in blotting out this Notary fellow's memory of faces and names to-day," reflected Hooper. He had seen a great deal of what eastern contractors called "funny business," around the "greenback" spouts of his Uncle Sam.

"Are your records all straight?" hazarded Hooper.

"Oh! yes!" gaily replied Fred. "I saw his entries all O. K. So, I am now ready to leave this initial point of a future empire. By the way, give me your San Francisco address."

Mr. James Walter Hooper glibly lied, for he gave a place which was conspicuously not the meeting haunt arranged by the quick witted Vinnie. "Some of the queens of shadow land must have posted her in New York!" thought Hooper, as he had read the Perdita's minute directions for his behavior on arrival.

"I can always write to you, any change," quietly said Hooper, with a sly gleam of his eye. "Neither of us, I guess, will ever refer to this little Truckee episode. It's a cold State's prison matter for both of us."

"Oh! It's nobody's business," hastily rejoined Wyman. "I have always been too loose about my documents and things. This straightens me out."

"I am too careless myself," rejoined Hooper, with a twinge of remorse for the numbers of interpolated checks which poor Paymaster Hallowell had unwittingly signed. "I only wish I had been only more active in my well doing," sighed Hooper, "I would not have been so

dependent on Vinnie's whims now. However, I might as well surrender at discretion." It was true that to be near her, to look into the soft brown eyes, even though their light was a lying beacon signal of passion, was now Hooper's very breath of life.

The dust-covered stage which bore Frederick Wyman, Esq., away from Truckee toward Reno, left him at the first watering station. "Never mind my fare," he hastily said to the driver." "I left some papers behind me by accident. I'll come up to-morrow." Jim the Penman was well over the Geiger grade, and the Spirit of the Summit whispered of Vinnie's open arms to him, before Wyman returned to Truckee.

His first morning duty was to sober up the factotum, whom he had made crazy drunk as the only Notary and Justice. But, he needed him now sober. In his capacity of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s assistant express agent, the recalcitrant receipted for a sealed package of documents, addressed to the County Recorder of Storey County, Virginia City, Nevada. The gold for the official fees and a liberal douceur, accompanied this forwarding of the exquisitely natural work of Jim the Penman.

"I will get the documents here in a week or so myself," remarked the man, now happily disembarrassed of friend Hooper. "I have to visit Sacramento and I will return in a week." A sigh of relief escaped the new owner of the "Mariquita."

On the next evening, Wyman, light-hearted, followed Hooper over the crested Sierras to the golden valley of the Sacramento. As he paced the hotel porch at Auburn, two days later, Mr. Wyman was in the gayest of moods while waiting for the last fragment of his stage journey. "The train from Folsom to Sacramento, then the boat, and in forty-eight hours I will know what Mrs. Robert

Devereux is like. By Jove! I must not stumble on Hooper. I will have to play the night owl."

As the great steamer "Chrysopolis" throbbed along down the matchless San Francisco Bay, Wyman's last plans were achieved in his deck dreams. "I will change the name of the mine, then the people will soon forget Devereux. I will let it lie idle this winter, and I will order my light machinery on this visit. By next spring, I will have grown into my recognized ownership, and all talk will have died away. Devereux and Berard will be merely faded shadows, and my uncontested title and possession will be known of all men. Then, by the Gods, next year, a single month's work will take out enough to give me the wherewithal to knock at the doors now closed to poor Fred Wyman."

As the great river steamer swept up to her landing, San Francisco's ten thousand twinkling lights seemed to shine in his happy heart, lighting the way to myriad veiled pleasures. "The Devil's own luck has stood in with me so far," he murmured, as he sped away from the city wharves. In the carriage, he deciphered from the stolen letters the humble address on Kearney Street where the lonely wife of his murdered partner had lived, in the vicinity of the theater, in which she acted as costumer. "By Heavens! I have it," he cried, and then, dismissing his driver at the nearest corner, he lounged into the huge music hall theater, only a vast man trap with its painted sirens and adjacent bar-rooms.

A few hospitable civilities to a lounging usher made him, at once, free of the lower corridors. Within, shouts and yells attested the vigor of the evening's enjoyment. "Oh! Yes. I know the woman you mean," babbled the usher. "A decent woman, too. You see she sickened a while ago and had to give up work and go to the hospital. Old

man McCabe, the stage manager, knows all about them. He took the little girl in. He's a good old chap, is Mac. And his wife is kind hearted."

Wyman departed happy with a last crumb of welcome news. "You'll find McCabe, alone here, at ten o'clock always in the mornings." "Luck still with me," cried Wyman in his confident joy. "I am all safe now. I hope she is by this time dead."

With unabashed front, the surviving partner visited the dingy rooms where Devereux's wife had dragged out the agony of two long weary winters, and a lonely summer. The "people opposite," those opportune Mercuries who always seem to be human encyclopedias, wondered at the appearance of the only visitor who had ever sought the departed lodger, save weazened-faced old Jimmy McCabe, the "melodeon" stage manager. Mr. Wyman's ready explanations of his desire to hire a resplendent costume for a masked ball, was met with a flood of detail. "Ah! The poor woman," said the middle-aged gossip, driving back a varied brood of youngsters who eagerly divided a handful of small coins, "You see, she moped herself sick, and when they took her to the Sisters' Hospital, old Mr. McCabe and his wife took the little girl away. No! There ain't nothin' here belongin' to them. The costumes and things wuz all the theater's own, an' they didn't have much. McCabe can tell ye all. She had some trouble with her husband, or lost him. That's all. No! I don't know what particular Catholic hospital she was taken to. She was all gone in. Consumption? Yes. That's the end of them worrying women. An' the man never turned up. The letter carriers don't leave no more letters. If ye were to see Mr. McCabe at the theater, ye can get what costumes ye want there. He told me he hoped to get the little girl into the orphan asylum. She's bright like, poor dear thing."

Before Wyman descended the stair, the sound of the washboard resounded and he had decided at once not to interview the kindly disposed McCabe. "I am invincible now—impregnable. The Mariquita is mine forever," he mused, as he wended his way down to order his machinery. "I'll get back to the Comstock and watch my hidden treasure."

At that very moment Vinnie Hinton, with glowing eyes, was pledging Mr. James Walter Hooper in a sparkling glass of Cliquot. "Jimmy," she laughed, "I am going to put you into high life. I've got a rich banking magnate here on the string."

CHAPTER V.

In Pay Ore.

It was no cold, ascetic turn of mind which caused Wyman to deny himself the varied pleasures of the Golden City. Satisfied that the wife and child of his dead partner had been hurled far away from his orbit, by the sudden shock of a new misery, he now yearned for the higher altitudes of the Comstock. Afraid to show his face, for fear of awkward explanations with Hooper, he made only a brief visit to the Miners' Foundry, to buy his machinery, before purchasing his four o'clock steamer ticket. He did, however, indulge in a three hours' quiet ride around the rapidly extending limits of San Francisco. This, with a single furtive visit to the Stock Board, and a glimpse of the new business palaces, verified all his winter dreams on Mount Davidson.

"Yes! Prosperity, wealth, luxury, even splendor, have come to pitch their gilded tents here," he muttered, as he swore in his heart: "I will force myself up here. I will yet rule among even these growing madmen." Poring over the journals, he observed the fever pulse of the "stock" mania, throbbing in their every line. The faces of the hurrying men, the sideling glances of the eager, hawkeyed women, all spoke to him of the iridescent bubbles now dazzling every wandering eye. Sudden wealth, quick prominence, unrestrained enjoyment! Vogue la galere!

"I will be my own Committee of Ways and Means," he reflected, as he concluded his orders for four sets of horse power gearing, a 20-foot circular arrastra quartz mill, and

all the simple outfit, needed to reduce some of his choicest selected ores. "It makes a hole in my safety fund to the extent of a couple of thousand dollars," thought Wyman, "but, in the winter and spring, my Swede, with a single carpenter, can get these machines into position at the mouth of the tunnel. The record's all right; my own possession continued and acknowledged, I can then break down and sack up ore enough myself, for the first few runs. I will soon have the means to draw in a goodly amount of floating mining stock in good claims, as well as to make my mine build its own great permanent mill. A cheap shed will cover all my workings, and, I will be a fairly rich man before even I attract local attention. But first, the mine's name must be legally changed, and the memory of Devereux and Berard fade away."

As the afternoon steamer whirled passed grim, rocky Alcatraz fort, quivering under the impulses of its sixty foot wheels, the budding capitalist caught a glimpse of the storm flag flying out over the huge citadel. "My Uncle Sam," he sneered, "I will thank you for a miner's patent to the 'Mariquita,' that's all. And, I would not trouble you for that—even that—if General Sidney Johnson had played our trump card for the rebellion here, out West. But, all's well that ends well," he mused, as he gazed back at that scene of his future triumphs.

San Francisco lay embattled on its sandy hills, glowing in golden sun gleams darted down from golden clouds, and there behind him, the setting sun left a shining wake of gold upon the blue, heaving waters. Even the long reaches of the sandy shore, stretching from Fort Point townwards, glistened with a gleaming light, suggestive of the golden grains, man's lure, womanhood's curse, and the soul's ready damnation.

'I will come back here in triumph, and these doors shall

all be flung wide open to welcome me," he pledged himself, as his eye rested on the pagodas where Pride already perched a bit above the humble every-day usefulness below. He had wolfishly gazed at the heaped up treasures of windows and marts, the scattered votive offerings of costly folly. The richly dressed women, racing on with kindling eyes in the glittering streets, had brushed the unknown dreamer aside. But, the rustle of silk, the sheen of velvet, the flutter of lace, still told him of the Paradise to come—that Eden whose white-breasted Eves, radiant in diamonds, with glowing eyes, drank, in beaming invitation, to the lucky man touched by Fortune's magic fingers.

One face haunted him still, the face of a woman who had flashed a pair of wonderful brown eyes, full of lingering softness, at the graceful mountaineer, even though his garb was not yet that of a Prince Charming. "I'd like to find her some day again, when I am rich," he muttered. "I would hang a rope of pearls upon that neck; but, it should bend. What a pair of eyes!"

He had watched the anonyma, as she swept into "Shreve's," with the stride of a goddess. Wayfarers turned to look again upon that poetry of grace in motion, for, the charm of face must ever yield to that nameless grace of the goddess' form—the Idalian model swelling in delicious curves 'neath the draping of these later days.

Wyman never knew that the fair one who charmed him, had laughingly parted, only a half hour before, with his departed collaborator, Jim the Penman. Waving a check before Hooper's eyes, which was signed with three cabalistic initials, she laughingly said, "You must not embarrass me in public, my boy. When you have mastered that one handwriting, I will show you then, how to turn paper into gold. I think that I shall set you up as a broker, in a

small way, my own particular broker; for I have a banker already."

Wyman was returning from a last tour of the locality whence the broken-hearted wife had been borne to the hospital, when this vision of passing beauty so dazzled him. She was, in fact, a star newly risen in the local firmament, and sundry social astronomers had already cast the inquiring glances of their opera-glasses at this strange divinity, murmuring in scientific quandary—"Whose?"

Wyman had passed on to the great Bella Union Theater, and, his heart had failed him as the barkeeper pointed out Mr. Billy McCabe, the veteran ex-Dublin manager, now the Asmodeus of the "Bella Union." He was a little bullet-headed man of sixty-five, with a keen gray eye, a decisive nose à la Wellington, and a bustling manner. Wyman had fancied that he might locate the orphan school where Miss Hope Devereux was sheltered under those "white wings" always stretched out to shield the friendless poor.

"He does not look like an easy customer to tackle. He might follow me and easily spot me," thought Mr. Frederick. "I fancy the Church will graft in this child as a sisterling by and by. Silence is golden. I will let well enough alone. I could not buy him with a few dollars."

All in all, Mr. Wyman of the Mariquita was pleased with his trip to the Bay. As the stage toiled up over the steep hills above Auburn, the borderer's heart grew light, when the forest shades welcomed him. The chattering bluejay's discordant scream, the plash of the waters falling into the far dim gorges, the blue skies domed above, where the poised mountain hawk fluttered as if mysteriously fixed in the thin ether, all this, called him away from the Vanity Fair he had left. But Pleasure and Desire, bold-eyed handmaidens, whispered still of the

speaking brown eyes of the Beautiful Unknown. "Time enough for that when I have my first hundred thousand," resolutely decided Wyman. "I will be a finished gentleman, and my chariot will have golden wheels. I will succeed; for, only the poor are despised in this western world."

Several neat little by-plans wove themselves now into the plotted career of the next year. "I can hide my secret operations easily by putting up a sign 'Ores sampled.' With a light steam-engine, I can cover expenses and so veil my own operations, until I am sure of both my own practical skill and reputed ownership." The half hour which others devoted to a "lightning meal" at Truckee, enabled Wyman to reclaim his papers from the Notary-Express agent, who was now professionally sober, as the village barber, and shaving several daringly trustful souls, at fifty cents a head.

"There you are, sir! All right to a trivet," cried the man of lather, with a sigh that he could not just then renew those "pleasing assurances." He was delighted to hear the grateful Wyman exclaim that he would "hang up" a half dozen drinks for him at the bar.

As Mr. Wyman of the Mariquita rolled out of Truckee, the very happiest man on the creaking Concord coach, he rejoiced in the properly recorded papers, which attested the slickness of Jim the Penman's imitative work. His last glimpse of the Notary was in his capacity of "man about town," making for those drinks, and leaving his razeed patrons astounded more at his "fortiter in re" than his "suaviter in modo."

"There's a good deal of electricity in this mountain air," growled a patron whose epidermis had partially followed the lost glory of his chin.

With the furtive moral triangulations of his nature,

Wyman could not avoid a careful cross-questioning of the barkeeper at Willows Cross Roads, as to the affray in which Berard had figured. "Poor Steve," said the saloonkeeper, as he bowed in answer to Wyman's courteous frontier question, "Join me?" "It was very neatly done, you see. This fellow was sort of rebellious like, and tried to back off, and sneak out his own pistol on Steve, but, Lord bless you, Steve had him plugged twice before you could say 'Jack Robinson.' Yes, sir. Right there where you're standing now. It was the quickest thing I ever see done in my life."

Wyman started, for his eye caught the dark discolored stains in the soft puncheon floor. It was the red seal of his new title to the "Mariquita." He gasped incoherently, "What did they do with him?"

"Oh, old man Holman planted him, down there at his ranch. Perhaps, he'll come up a Latter Day Saint. Who knows?"

It was a most judicious investment, the pocket flask which kept Wyman's "spirits" up, all the way to Gold Hill, for, dark shadows had fallen once or twice over his future, golden as it had gleamed. He muttered between frequent drinks: "The past is all closed up; the Holmans are all gone; the girl is an orphaned waif; Berard and Devereux are both dead. They can now watch each other," he gloomily joked. "This fellow Hooper will surely drift away to ruin. I can then defy the Devil himself."

With an expiring gleam of caution, Wyman left the stage at Gold Hill. To his delight, he found the silent boniface there, had "sold out rich" and, gone "to the States." Another "active young man" towered behind the bar, one who was of a fresher grist than the man whose friendship with the "sports" had, perhaps, induced the change of

ownership of the hotel. Perfectly satisfied with the drifting of the leaves of Time over his blind trail, Mr. Wyman entered the hourly stage, and returned, in peace, to Virginia City. "God himself couldn't dig up all the little threads of this thing now. It is buried, buried forever." This irreverent self gratulation of Wyman's attested both the end of his journey and the emptiness of his flask. He slept —a happy man.

He dreamed strange dreams of a rosy future, that night in his little cabin on the rocky battlements of Mount Davidson. Happy stars shone down on him, for the faithful Swede was evidently true to his trust. There was no sign of the interloper, and, a brief visit satisfied him that his secret marks and signals had been left undisturbed in tunnel and shaft. The "Mariquita" was safe at last!

"I have nothing left to fear now. I am all right, and I will now set up my machinery, and soon be in the richest pay ore. But, the millionaire of the future fell asleep, dreaming of the wistful brown eyes of the Cleopatra à la mode, who had paused to transfix him with her parthian glance down there "at the Bay," where rivers of coveted diamonds flashed and sparkled in Shreve's windows.

"I will have them all soon at my beck and call, men shall bow to the owner of the Mariquita, and, women's white arms shall draw me down to the whiter haven of their throbbing bosoms. Gold is the one potent charm, and, I have now found the side door of Ali Baba's cave."

The wild wind shook the frail cabin and whistled on, wailing down through Grizzly Cañon, where the now scattered pyramid of rocks weighted down the man who had more nerve than luck. Steven Berard slept on as camly as his victim rested far away under the grassy meadows of Holman's ranch, for neither pale ghost haunted the sleep of the fortunate man, who had more

luck than nerve. It was reserved for Frederick Wyman to shine out later as "one of Nature's noblemen," in that bright constellation of bright immortal souls, borne out from obscurity on the golden tide of Mount Davidson's millions—the evolution of Nature's noblemen.

The spring of 1865 found Virginia City spreading its ambitious feelers still farther along the sides of the grim old mountain. Several stately brick and masonry buildings were pointed to with pride. There was a longer line of hoisting works, noisier stamp mills and greater smoke clouds drifting along the Comstock Lode. Far and near, the miners' cabins now speckled the dreary landscape as if distributed by some gigantic pepper box, fearfully clinging to every little rift and level place. The near approach of the railroad, the doubling of population, and an ambitious efflorescence of the "family element," proved that here "Civilization on its luminous wings, soared, Phœnix-like, to Jove." A haughty local pride shone in the face of every "honest miner," for, Nevada was a State at last. Its silver star proudly glittered upon the banners of the irresistible host which General Grant was ready to hurl on the hard held lines of the matchless Lee.

Virginia City was gay and cheerful, for the great mines were all "in pay ore." The names, "Gould and Curry," "Ophir," "Crown Point," "Mexican," "Imperial," and "Chollar," had gone forth to the astonished world. Engraved certificates fluttered around the brokers' offices of Virginia City, thicker than "leaves in Vallombrosa." The feverish tick of the telegraph, day and night, bore cipher-hidden tidings away to San Francisco, where in the "Big Board," the "Little Board," on the curbstone, and at each corner, the blinder children of blind Plutus "went it blind," daily, on their favorite "gambles."

The sound of revelry by night was, however, judiciously

regulated, and, the social tension never rose again to the "hanging point," in the prosperous mountain city. The Carson River was noisy with custom stamp mills; long mule trains, groaning teams, and sporadic horsemen attested the vitalized movement of the queen silver city. For already, beneath the stony surface, the great pumps were drawing the "lower levels," strangely termed "lower," at four hundred feet, where no man dared to dream that the miner's pick would yet be swung thirty-five hundred feet below the flinty crags, over which "Strideaway" had galloped, when Steve Berard went recklessly on to his death.

In all this blossoming and bourgeoning, no one held up his chin more bravely than Frederick Wyman, the "rising citizen." Mr. Wyman's "Sampling Works," were now a well-known center of activity. In the long winter of 1864, a practical course of ore working and assay studies, had fitted the borderer for his assumed calling. A neat little industrial center was the Wyman works, where a hundred horse-power engine moved a fine line of practical machinery. Men wondered at the pre-occupied air of the prosperous young man. But, success had given a searching glance to his eye; boldness came with the bullion he now held in a precious secret reserve, and the name of "Wyman" ornamented the City Council. A substantial stone house had replaced his cabin at the mouth of the "Mariquita" tunnel, and the Magnolia saloon and Golden Eagle bar-room lost forever the inspiring presence of the young "business man." In the leasure hours, when not running his enlarged mills upon "custom work," the surviving partner of the "Mariquita" had verified, by secret explorations, the treasures for which poor Devereux had died. They were evidently priceless!

When the telegraphed news of General Grant's great

advance on the collapsing lines of the defiant Virginians at Petersburg made March, 1865, a time of breathless national anxiety, Frederick Wyman finally cast up his reckoning, as he sat alone, in his comfortable stone house, on a spring evening. "This is the beginning of the end," he murmured, over his San Francisco paper. "The United States will soon be able to give me a title, without any reference to the Southern Confederacy. It's all up with the South."

Prosperity had agreed with Wyman, whose mind had long since relegated to Limbo, the haunting shades of the departed Devereux and Berard. Lightly had he borne the death, before Atlanta, of his own father, an undefeated exponent of Kentuckian valor. His own cold, selfish nature had been engrossed in guarding the hidden stolen treasure of the hills. As he turned over his San Francisco mail, on this March evening, the "rising citizen" was painfully reminded of the one vulnerable point in the Achilles armor of his title to the stolen mine. For, a neat business circular and card accompanied a brief letter, in which the writer tendered his business facilities. Wyman's hand shook as he gazed at the showy card. "Ah! He has crawled up!" he murmured as he read,

JAMES WALTER HOOPER,
STOCK & EXCHANGE BROKER,
348 CALIFORNIA ST.,
SAN FRANCISCO.

"There's the only man who might annoy me,—Jim the Penman. He seems to be crawling up in the world. I wonder who is behind him. He certainly was not over-

loaded with capital when he left here." Wyman enjoyed his faint sneer, for over a hundred thousand dollars in doré bullion was now stored away on his own private account, in the vaults of the leading assay and bullion exchange, on the Comstock. "If I could trust this smart fellow, he might be now useful. With my local knowledge here, and a well arranged cipher, he could gather in some of the Virginia City securities, often at a rare bargain. But, could I trust him? There is only one kind of man to trust. I don't know much about women. On principle, I wouldn't trust any one of the bright-eyed devils."

Wyman's eyes glittered, often now, with a strange eagerness. He rose and paced the room. Something seemed to be calling him away. "Not yet! Not yet!" he gasped, as floods of hot blood flamed through his agile form. "Not until I am a millionaire. Then, then, I will try the 'Golden Rule'; the rule of the Twenty-Dollar Piece. For, no ear is deaf to its ring. Could I trust to this man? The only safe men that I know are my old partners, 'sleeping partners.' But, I must keep an eye on him. If he gets money—power—his memory may call up the 'Mariquita.'

"Pshaw! That's all safely buried now. The 'Lone Star' has effaced the memory of the 'Mariquita.' It was a capital idea to change the name. No one will ever dig up the records of the relocation. This chap, Hooper, might however keep an eye on me, and blackmail me a bit. No, he will be afraid. For, there's forgery ahead of Jim the Penman's story. No, he will never tell it. But I'll watch him. I may find him to be a good business man next year, perhaps." And, as Wyman gazed around his own comfortable abode, he thought very complacently of several thousand shares of south end stocks which he had quietly picked up during the last year.

Marketing a few of his mingled gold and silver bars from the "Lone Star," now and then, the exchange offices supposed Wyman to be only realizing on the "tribute bullion," paid him for sampling ores. For, these huge dull-looking bricks, in value from twelve hundred to eight thousand dollars, were then current at their stamped refinery value.

"I could, perhaps, use some of my idle capital," mused Wyman, "in picking up stock here, if I had a man to work with now; for, month by month, the rising values and daily growing activity show that the lead is being traced down to the 'Mariquita.' When I push my workings it will be a natural discovery, and people will think I have just struck a 'dead thing.'" The slang word, "dead thing" brought back his "sleeping partners," and Wyman restored his complacency with a visit to the sideboard.

"The one mistake of my whole campaign was not to have traced out the fate of that woman and child, to the last detail, while down at the Bay!'" he soliloquized, as he seated himself again before the cosy fire. "This fellow Hooper, lying loose around town, might prick up his ears some day at the name Devereux." The great pine logs snapped and crackled cheerily as Wyman laughed away this one last haunting shadow. "Bah!" he cried, "Jim the Penman is not likely to haunt hospitals or Catholic orphan asylums to look up the loose ends of that little Truckee transaction. No! He will be found racing after that will-o'-the-wisp woman, who made a fool of him away in the East; for a rascal he was before, yes, and a dangerous rascal, too. I must keep an eye on this one shady party. His star is beginning to twinkle a little higher than I thought it would, but he's powerless to hurt me in any way." Wyman started as his Chinese servant glided into the room.

"One man want see you!" the bland Mongolian remarked, in a voice void of emphasis. Wyman had jumped up in a sudden alarm.

"Damn that fellow! He comes stealing in like a ghost," cried the irritated miner, as he stepped to the door. His right hand was bestowed neatly à la Berard, ready for either peace or war. One useful lesson he had learned from Steven!

"Hello! Just the man I was thinking of. Come in, Andy," cried Wyman hospitably, as the huge bulk of the "Comstocker" darkened the door. "Why, you are no end of a swell, Andy!" continued the host, in some surprise, as he pushed out a cigar box, and then motioned to his Mongolian adjutant. The Chinaman adjusted the drinkables with the same passionless leer he would have used in laying out a deal at "fan-tan," spreading an opium "lay out," or setting up "hemlock" for the "justest of the Greeks." The Sphinx of all of the East is John Chinaman.

"I've just been down to the Bay, Wyman," said Andy, as by a star observation, he measured a four-finger drink. "A fellow like me has got to dress up to the style, down there now."

"Everything all right, with you, Andy," said Wyman, as he surveyed the resplendent appearance of the ex-committee man of the "101."

"Oh, yes. I have made some very neat turns, lately," cried Bowen, complacently, as he bit the tip from a fine cigar. "I hear that you, too, are rushing things."

"About all we can do, all the while, here! I'm thinking of extending the reduction works. If I can hold my present business, I may soon put up a mill of my own down on the Carson," slowly replied Wyman, feeling instinctively that Bowen had some special object in his visit.

"I wish you would put up a mill, up here, on the lead, Fred," said Bowen, his face glowing with eager emotion, and good whisky. "The fact is, that I came down here to have a 'square' talk with you. I have an idea of making an apparent show of opening some of my old locations down here, and, then, getting them incorporated. There's money in it. You can sell anything now. I want to have something visible to back up my beautiful stock certificate. The fact is, Wyman, anything with an elegant steel engraving on it, will sell down at 'Frisco' just now! Women, merchants, servants, outsiders, mechanics, laborers, every one is beginning to take a little flyer of their own, and I've got a man down there now to help me, who is as smart as chain lightning. If I can only get up something that he can sell, he will rush things. I never thought he had the 'go' in him, which he is showing now. I'll let you into the deal, Fred, if you'll only take a hand."

"Who's your smart friend?" sneered Wyman, as he narrowly eyed his lymphatic visitor.

Bowen burst out into a horse laugh. "You'd never guess, but he is a lightning stylish broker now, and he's got a holy terror of a pretty woman, too, behind him. Do you remember the fellow we once called 'Jim the Penman.'" Wyman's face was pale, and whiteninge very instant, as he strolled over to the sideboard and sampled his private cognac. Five-dollar ordinary whisky was good enough for his visitor.

"Do you mean that man Hooper?" carelessly queried Wyman. But, he did not dare to turn around and face the burly miner. He had not yet caught the valuable secret of Gambler Berard's nerve. And, the letter and ornate card of James Walter Hooper were even now lying on his desk in plain sight.

"The very same man. He's in pay ore now, you bet!" energetically answered Bowen. "Say!" he rose, and then whispered confidentially, "You know ——, the big banker?" Wyman was now all attention, as he hastily nodded. "Well," lazily answered Bowen, "This party in calico, or rather silk and laces, runs the big banker's 'private affairs,' and Mr. James Walter Hooper, 'Esquire,' is her especial 'business man.'" Wyman seated himself quietly, and gazed blankly at the returned Argonaut.

"What's your scheme?" he finally demanded in a sharp, cold voice. His narrow nature was up in arms. Every quivering nerve was ringing its hidden alarm bell; for, "Jim the Penman," once a nomadic vaurien, now a "prominent" man, and the "power behind the throne," whereon a veiled goddess sat ruling the great banker, was a most dangerous shade looming up, far too near the "Lone Star."

Andy Bowen's eyes twinkled with an easy cunning, as he said, "You remember that this partner of yours, Devereux——?"

"What about him?" snappishly cried Wyman, springing up.

"Well!" lazily cried Bowen, reaching out for another drink. "I 'jumped' a whole lot of locations of his up here a few months ago. They were all advertised for assessment work, and I went in and got hold, cheaply, of the whole lot. I wish to God that I knew where he is now."

Frederick Wyman thought of the unknown grave hidden by the long, waving grass of the Carson meadows. His own blood surged back to his heart as he thought, "Thank God! Old Holman has cleared out forever." Bowen's loosely digested story ran on, under the gentle stimulus of his "toddy." "I wish that I could get a clear title direct from him. I am going to incorporate all these claims as

new mines and then, let Hooper rush the stock out on the market. Now, I don't care to throw away fifty thousand dollars to put up a real stamp mill, on a humbug lot of mines. Now, Wyman, if you built a mill up here, I could make a good show, and you could run a lot of my ore through for me and keep the sham up long enough to float the mines. I could buy or steal a lot of rich ore. I'll guarantee you a good, round profit, and I suppose that you'll soon want a mill if you open the 'Mariquita,' now that you've bought out Devereux? Hooper told me to see you and talk the thing over with you." Frederick Wyman's face was livid with rage, as he walked away to a window and then glared down into the mouth of Grizzly Cañon.

"Did Hooper tell you that I had bought Devereux out?" he suddenly said in a thick voice, as he faced Andy Bowen, who was regarding him with the lazy adroitness gained at much patient "poker" practice.

"Why, yes!" simply replied Andy. "Didn't you see Hooper when you were down at the Bay?"

"No!" slowly answered the disturbed surviving partner, "but, I met him on the road. I may have told him that I had bought Devereux out. I don't know where Bob Devereux is now. I guess that he just let the whole thing slide, and then went East with what money I paid him. I've changed the name of the mine, however, to the 'Lone Star.'" Andy was cogitating deeply.

"I think you're about on the level just to strike the tail end of the lead, at about five hundred feet. I believe that you've really got a mine there," open-heartedly mused Bowen. "I always thought so. Why don't you push the thing?"

"Well, I will be frank," answered Wyman, "I do not care for partners. I'm doing pretty well now, Andy, and making some money. I called that mine the 'Lone Star,'

because I'm going to push it alone when I can afford to. But, I won't overreach myself. The fact is, Andy," and Wyman smiled a wolfish smile, as he surveyed his own handsome personage, "I want to live like a gentleman, when I can get into the right place in life. You see my people were 'way up' in Kentucky. I am a gentleman born, a southern gentleman, too."

"Going into politics?" smiled the good-natured prospector.

"No," replied the southerner. "We have already got a couple of 'sage brush' senators, and, you know, I'm on the wrong side. I was a rebel sympathizer."

"Oh, yes, you're a secesh," easily laughed Bowen. "Well, what do you say to going in with us on this deal? Hooper is as sharp as a weasel, and he's got an all-fired smart woman now to back him. She's got money, too. God, she is a stunner! I saw her wearing diamond earrings down there as big as hazel-nuts. No humbug. Real sparklers. She's a ripper, a dazzler." Wyman sighed as he thought of the poor waif of fortune, Hooper, basking in the smiles of such a sultana.

And, Mr. Andrew Bowen was right. It was, indeed, a verity that the great firm of San Francisco jewelers had imagined that these especially selected stones were intended to decorate the lawful spouse of the sharp-featured banker. But, the "head of the house" smiled a grim, quiet smile, as the banker paid for them with a cashier's check, and then, carelessly dropped the blue velvet box in his pocket, with the remark, "This is a little private matter." And, dashing Vinnie Hinton merrily laughed, as she allowed the banker that evening to adjust the two bits of dazzling carbon in the filmy sea-shell pink of her own pretty ears. "In consideration of your good taste, I will allow you to take the liberty," the queen of the year mur-

mured, with a smile which was a devil's draught of sorcery. In the dusky splendor of that concealed harem on Sacramento street, no such witching devil had ever reigned before. And so, this strange woman of a new empire was the Egeria of the rising young broker!

"What do you say, Wyman, can we make a deal?" urged Big Andy as he took a last draught, and then lit a fresh cigar, before facing the evening zephyr. "There's big money in it for all of us."

"I will think it over, Andy," answered the fox-like Wyman, who was now sheltered far back in his mental cave of safe retreat, a cautious reserve.

"When shall I see you again?" The "surviving partner" affected a carelessness which he was far from feeling. "If these brutes were to sink down on some of these locations, they might really strike the ledge. I think that I'll play them a double cross. I think I see the way," he mused, as Bowen reached for his sombrero.

"I'm going to bring some surveyors down to-morrow, and block things out in the way I wish, so I can work up their locations to the best showing. I may come in and see you. Are you safe from eaves-droppers here?" Bowen lazily answered.

"Only my Chinaman; and he speaks no English. Come in then, and take breakfast with me," answered Wyman, as he held out his hand.

"It's a whack," remarked Bowen. "I guess we can fix up a little deal. The fact is, there's entirely too much money down at the Bay. Now, Wyman, you've got the education and blood, and the good looks, too. You could run all these things in good shape down there, and also live like a fighting-cock. A man like you is lost up here in Virginia City. Why don't you run down and see Hooper himself if we can hit it off?" The giant miner

lurched out into the night, with an informally shouted good-bye, "So long," leaving Frederick Wyman excited, and, far more impressed by his words than ever Bowen would have dared to hope. A new life was offered to him now!

"It is strange, strange!" dreamed Wyman, by his dying fire. "This thing closes right in around me. It's the devil's own luck." And, he tossed that night in uneasy dreams, for there came back to him the sinuous, gliding beauty of the unknown, whose brown eyes had thrilled him to the very marrow, as she flashed him that one not unconcerned glance. He dreamed of the nameless divinity whom he had seen on his visit. She was the "first bit of choice goods" he had marked at the devil's auction. And, on this lonely, anxious night, he strangely dreamed that they were reveling together. That her rich sensuous lips murmured, "It is you; I have waited for you!" And in his dream, he realized all the hidden treasures of the "Lone Star."

Morning, crisp and clear, brought him the conviction that he must either rule this new combination of Bowen and Hooper, or else in the end be gravely annoyed by them. "Shall I go down to San Francisco and face this ex-forger? Have I money enough yet? or shall I open the Lone Star?" Out on the crags of the mountain side, Wyman found his own keen brain active in its wary counsels. Already a line of flag poles, indicated the rapid work of Bowen's surveyors. "By Heavens! I have it!" cried Wyman. "One or two of these locations join my 'Mariquita' of the olden time. I must operate so as to get them entirely into my own hands, and so keep off all encroachment. Joining these fellows, they will be always my friends in the future. I will make them my blind dupes; for I will be on the inside, and I will buy

in and control all the nearest locations to the 'Lone Star.' I can easily handle Mr. Andy Bowen. Whisky first, and then get him well in my debt. Besides, I will be always here, near him. I must, however, go to San Francisco to see Hooper. To rule him, to gain a fatal leverage upon him, I must try and take that woman away from him! I wonder what she is like. Hooper is not such a beauty."

Mr. Frederick Wyman regarded himself with a pleasant adulation in the glass, as he returned to his domicile for the early coffee. "Money I can also bring to bear on her, at the right time, out of the 'Lone Star's' hidden treasury. This woman probably knows all the secrets of the greatest operator in San Francisco. Bowen says he is her blind slave. I am younger than her millionaire master, younger than Hooper, her working slave, and I have plenty of loose money. I can lavish it on her. And, what woman ever withstood the right sum of money, at the right time?" He sneered again. A glow of future glory lit up the unruffled brow of the "surviving partner." "I can see a broadening path. I have the hidden power in my hands here. And, by God! she shall teach me all the tricks of her millionaire protector, and then make me a man of the golden circle. I will go in with these two men, and control them," he decided. "Yes, I will go down also to San Francisco," he murmured, "and it will be diamond cut diamond. She shall light my way on to the future with the Lamp of Love, and I, will furnish the golden oil to feed the sacred flame; for no long continued passion can ignore the fact that Mr. Cupid has golden wings."

There was a pleasant smile on the face of Mr. Fred Wyman as he welcomed his lumbering fly into the parlor where Wyman set himself slyly at work to play the spider.

"About two bottles of the best whisky, will bring out the whole story," he craftily mused; and it was true that a very fair word picture of the veiled goddess delighted Wyman before Andy Bowen carried a "good load" of that best whisky up to the streets of Virginia City.

It was late in the afternoon when Bowen left Wyman's private office. "You think then, you'll go down and see Hooper?" he urged, hoping for a definite answer. Already a sybarite, Mr. Frederick Wyman allowed his glowing imagination to dwell on Andy Bowen's rough sketch of the veiled goddess, for several days before he decided finally to answer in the affirmative. But, his lynx eyes had fathomed every detail of Andy Bowen's most ingenious proposed swindles. "I will make both these fellows swindle themselves, and, by Jove, I will then take this bewitching woman away from Hooper, but not till she has learned to serve the owner of the 'Lone Star.' I need a woman to lift me, not one to slave for," he mused.

A week later, Andy Bowen sat with beaming eyes, listening to the pearls of wisdom falling from the lips of Frederick Wyman. The cosy interior of Wyman's bachelor home was a type of cheerfulness itself, as the two men sat at a large table covered with plats and maps. Bowen, in working clothes, and full of a subject which he was master of, was the embodiment of the rough, hardy American prospector. He had laid away his magnificent garb, for use in future visits to "the Bay," as these human chamois termed San Francisco.

"The fact is, Wyman, I attracted a good deal of attention here in that rig," said Andy, as he deftly manipulated his toddy with a long spoon.

"I should imagine so," drily answered Wyman, whose undeveloped æsthetic tastes were, at least, above cluster pins, star spangled waistcoats and trousers of a damning

intricacy of brilliant plaid. Two pound gold watches, massive bullion dog chains, specimen rings and diamond studs, neatly infesting solferino colored flannel shirts, were alien even to border Kentucky taste.

"Yaas," thoughtfully answered Andy. "Firstly, you see, that outfit cost me about twenty dollars a day extra for drinks."

"How so?" queried Wyman in some surprise. He had never been very convivial, and he had also feared to become a saloon lounger, while the secret of the "Lone Star," erstwhile the "Mariquita," burned in his locked-up bosom. He had also sworn a solemn oath never to "give away" his own secrets while drunk. He had seen too many fool shows of the kind. The two sleeping partners might avenge themselves, even from their forgotten graves.

"Oh! I had to 'wet that suit of clothes,' and 'set 'em up' for the 'whole house,' wherever I went. Besides, by hookey, every fellow I owed a dollar to up here came piling down on me for the 'cold coin.' They thought I had struck it richer than 'Sandy Bowers.' Now, I had also to pay off a whole lot of old 'whisky' and 'poker debts,' and I hold that it's clean throwing money away, when a fellow is forced to pay up this old dead-horse money."

"You are quite right, Andy," agreed Wyman, with his eyes fixed on the maps. He was studying the interlaced "locations," which lapped and overlapped along the five or six miles of the mountain sides in wild confusion. "Have you all your new lines laid out properly here?" brusquely queried the borderer.

"In grand style, to the queen's taste," cheerfully remarked Andy. "I paid four hundred dollars to the surveyors for this, and for the record of these sixteen locations. Hooper sent me up the new names, and they are all "way up." Wyman studied a neat side scroll whereon the

legend, "The Hooper, Bowen & Co.'s properties," bore the list of the surface claims proposed to be incorporated and handled: "Forest Belle," "Southern Chief," "Rising Star," "Pearl of Nevada," "Champion," and so on to the end, read out Wyman slowly. His thin lips parted in their usual sneer.

"I suppose the brown-eyed witch named some of these, Andy? They do look a little better than 'Jackrabbit,' 'Lone Wolf,' 'Six shooter,' and 'Walleye,' or 'Coyote.'"

"Oh, yes! you bet she did!" retorted Bowen. "She's up to every move that Hooper makes. Why, that there woman's only got a girl shaped head, and a pair of 'half cryin' eyes,' but she is a regular lightning striker. My God! she's got the nerve." Andy "located" his toddy, as he remarked, "If her big backer ever found out the little game she's playing with Hooper, he'd land Jim in the State's prison, and run the woman right out of the State." Wyman's eyes flamed with a velvety softness of tantalized desire, as Bowen continued. "The very last thing she did was to give me a private note to the old lawyer who runs ——'s business up here."

"What did he say?" continued Andy, answering the question of Wyman's eager eyes.

"He just told me he'd put all the incorporation papers through at once for me, and it wouldn't cost me a cent. She said to me when I left, 'Andy, I'll ask the Judge to supper when he comes down, and you'll find him very obliging.' And, so I did! She told me, too, to go and see 'Sandy Bowers'' wife. You know they call her 'the Washoe seeress,' since the 'bank gang' got most of Sandy's property away from him. They all pay her for her opinion. You see she's the oldest hand of a respectable woman up here, and the boys, naturally, give her all the points. She's a kind of second-sight woman."

"Did you really go and see Mrs. Bowers?" anxiously asked Wyman, his heart beating lest the gnomes of the "Lone Star" might have chattered to this queer old frontier prophetess. Wyman feared the grizzly shades of his "sleeping partners." "By heaven! I believe I'll have the old Indian dig up Berard and pitch him in the Carson River," he mused, as Andy volubly replied:

"Mother Bowers told me that there was a big mine hidden down here. She looks in a glass ball and pretends to see what's underground. 'But, it's not for you, it's for some one else,' she cackled, as she stopped short. So, I'm going to speculate on them locations and sell them." Wyman's heart was leaping wildly in a strange unrest. "Now you've got the whole lay-out, Fred," finished up Bowen. "I've had a dozen telegrams lately from Hooper. He's got a man waiting down there. I suppose that the witch woman has twisted some other capitalist around that pretty finger of hers, and got him 'on a string.' You've got first show with us, Fred, but you must talk turkey now. You see the mill would be of use to you when you open your mine."

"I tell you what I'll do, Andy," cried Wyman, who now had a strange, wild feeling gnawing at his heart. Those night hours of the last week had showed to him dazzling dreams of wealth, power, of all the myriad pleasures of the fast, fierce, life of the reckless moneyed circles of San Francisco. This woman of Circe-like charms seemed to have the key to every hidden mystery. The young man shut his eyes a moment and drifted on in wild dreams of all that passion's tide can bring sweeping along youth's gay bark between golden gleaming shores; for those brown "half cryin'" eyes seemed to lure him on!

"You've got four locations there, of the sixteen you own which touch my 'Lone Star.' Now, if you and

Hooper will organize these and give me all the stock, so I'll have no boundary trouble, I'll then go in with you even on the other twelve. I'll put up a good ten-stamp mill here of my own in grand shape. It will cost me fully fifty thousand dollars. I'll work off all your sample ores in any way you want, and stand in, square with you. I've got my own assayer, too, here now, and I can give your twelve mines on the market, any reports and standing you want. Now, I'll also put up an even third of all the money to handle these twelve, but, you and Hooper must give me the four; all the stock, except just enough to keep you and him, and a few more men whom we name as directors. In the other affair, we share and share alike, and I'll so go in with you and help you rob those damned fools down at the Bay. We might as well have their money as any one else! What do you say, Andy?" Wyman's hand trembled slightly as he tried his own Otard, Dupuy & Co. cognac.

"It's a whack as far as I go," genially said Andy. "I'll telegraph Hooper. The little woman stole a couple of private cipher codes from her big banker, and she's got one that he gave her, too. I'll have the answers all to-morrow. But, Hooper's in a great hurry. When could you go down?" Bowen's eyes gleamed with a rough good humor.

"If I shut things down here, and you can stay and watch my place, I could leave to-morrow night. I could stay for a week at the city, and then order the mill and come right back. I've had the mill site surveyed and plans drawn for some time."

"All right," cried Andy, "It will be a go. I'll go now and telegraph, and, I tell you, Fred, Hooper will give you a rattling good time down there. He is a high flyer now. You are just the boy to put on style with the best of them."

In ten minutes, Wyman was left dreaming alone before the fire. His altered circumstances and his concealed treasure had warranted him in preparing the means of showing a somewhat braver front than on his first visit to San Francisco. "I think I will do. I will let her educate me a bit," mused Wyman, "if she is the right one. Nothing like a woman to bring a man around. I wonder if these two fellows will really drop into my trap. If they do, I am all right, if I can only play a winning game with this pretty 'she-devil.' She can open the door for me of that 'inside ring,' which runs this whole coast. If she does, then I am a made man. But, my lady, the woman who will betray one man, will find a way to deceive another at the right time. She shall never know the secrets of the 'Lone Star.' It shall shine for me alone. But, if I can use her to witch Hooper and Andy Bowen, it will be well worth my while to change a couple of these ore bars into a necklace for that swan-like neck of hers." And Mr. Wyman dreamily repeated a childish proverb of his own, "Nothing for nothing in this world." "Once in the ring with these two smart rascals between me and the public, I can go on up to the head. And then! then I will show them what it is to live."

Never had Andy Bowen hurled his huge bulk along as smartly as when, next day, he hurried down from the Western Union Telegraph office to Wyman's works. The eager "surviving partner" had already marked Andy in his "downward career," and it was easy to divine from the reckless haste of the prospector that he was the bearer of good tidings. Wyman looked up calmly from an inspection of his daily assay book, as Bowen burst into the private office. In his hand he waved two dispatches.

"Here's one for you. Read it! I ciphered this out, and this to me is Hooper's answer. He says: 'Proposi-

tion accepted just as made. Please have friend come at once; papers drawn here; send all maps and papers you have ready by him.' " Wyman had learned nerve enough to control any outward gleam of satisfaction as he listened while his eye rested on his private dispatch. "Meet you at boat; dine with me at Martin's; telegraph from Sacramento." Extending his hand, he calmly said, "Andy, it's a bargain, we are three of a kind now." The seal of the spirit soon ratified the ambitious compact in which Wyman became the "Co." of the elegantly engrossed map title.

Three days later, Fred Wyman was still calmly observant as he entered a private room at Martin's Restaurant, "down at the Bay," with the resplendent Hooper. As a door opened, and a beautiful woman swept into the salon where the feast was set for three, Wyman's heart leaped up as a velvety voice murmured, "I think we have met once before, last year." And now he was under the spell of the "half cryin' eyes."

BOOK II.

In Bonanza Days.

CHAPTER VI.

One of Nature's Noblemen.

The July morning sun streaming down over the Coast Range leaped in with a golden flood, as Frederick Wyman's valet drew the curtains of his private apartment promptly at nine o'clock, as ordered; for these summer months of eighteen hundred and seventy-five were times of a wild upheaval in San Francisco. Neither rich nor poor droned out the fleeting moments of these fierce Bonanza days. The poor, desiring to abridge their poverty, going early afield, were jostled by the rich, ever agog to become richer; for the golden tide, the silver stream of wealth had leaped down the Sierras from far Virginia City. Congested California street now eyed askance its budding rival Pine street, and the haughty summits of huge redwood palaces began to show their "fine sky-lines," on "Nob Hill." Rival bank palaces, great hotels, huge marts of business in construction, littered the streets with débris. San Francisco's hills, its outlying districts, nay even its "Tar Flat" and plebeian district, "south of Market," sent hordes of crazed

men and women pouring down daily to the Big Board, the Little Board and the countless brokers' offices. A mad carnival of gambling.

On this particular morning, Tony Morani, the very pearl of valets, had skimmed over all the stock news before presenting a sheaf of dailies to the lordly occupant of the very handsomest bachelor apartment in the occidental city. Morani's glistening black eyes gleamed with pride, as he deftly arranged the morning coffee service of the most successful young capitalist of the Pacific Coast. His neat little dark mustache bristled attentively as Frederick Wyman, with a huge self satisfaction, uncoiled himself from the meshes of a most delightful night's slumbers. There was contentment in his first good-humored query:

"What sort of a morning, Tony?"

"Splendid, sir!"

"Have my horses here at four o'clock then!" pleasantly directed the youngest and far the handsomest of the rising millionaires. Morani bowed in silence, and awaited his master's further orders.

"Bring in the letters, and tell Hopkins to come in here." In five minutes Mr. Wyman had run over his list of morning engagements, and daintily picked out his private mail.

"What is there on for me this morning?" briskly demanded Wyman of his keen-eyed, pale-faced young secretary.

"Mr. Wilder, for orders, before the Board, sir. Mr. Brown, as usual," answered the neat-framed lad, referring to his memorandum commonplace book. "Captain Haley also telegraphed his arrival from the mine. Be here at eleven, sir."

"Ah!" briskly cried the millionaire, "Let nothing interfere with Haley. Be sure of that. The other people must be put off. I must see him."

Hopkins bowed and retired, casting an envious glance at the splendid pied à terre of the man who once ate from a tin plate the sodden bacon and greasy beans prepared by that frowsy old Indian Ganymede, "Captain Johnson." "Autres temps, autres moeurs!" A judicious liberality of backsheesh had enabled the old Piute brave to float happily away to Hades on a burning tide of fire-water. "Just as well to have the old beast out of the way," said Fred. "The last of the old-timers. And it's cheaper, too, than to have him knocked on the head." Millionaire Frederick Wyman, on a visit of inspection to where a forty stamp mill now hammered away at the "Lone Star" ores, had called up Captain Bob Haley, his superintendent. "Give that old Indian, Cap. Johnson, all the whisky he wants, and let him keep a den in that old cabin down in Grizzly cañon," sharply ordered the pet of Plutus. "He used to be my cook in the old times."

No memories of the log cabin lingered now around this Kearney street abode, at once an art museum, bachelor nest, hidden harem, and a crystallization of all the lightning effects of Aladdin's lamp. Spacious waiting rooms, the apartment of gray-haired old Cashier David Brown, whose pride was in his faultlessly kept books, and several private entrances, gave a sober air to the modesty of this bonanza Monte Cristo. There were always several human buffers between Wyman and any sudden intrusion. A keen-eyed fighting man lingered within call around the two or three adjacent blocks, where the sons of gold from their cosy, hidden nests could dip one foot in the rosy flood of the sparkling wavelets of the gay tide of the demi-monde, and yet with the other, stand in the ripple of the silver sea of society—San Francisco society.

Private telegraph and telephone wires, "stock tickers," and a corps of messengers were also adjuncts of Frederick

Wyman's business affairs. A high priest of the hours of rosy dalliance, Tony Morani alone admitted those who came with a smile and left with a sigh. But, one woman for ten years had boasted a private key to the personal side of this Janus-faced bachelor haunt of luxury. It was the imperial Vinnie Hinton, to whom all of the golden circle still bowed. For, at thirty-five, the bright promise of her youth "once written on her brow," had only been replaced by the noonday glow of an Aspasian beauty. Her sweet solace had cost several money kings a world of memories and of sighs.

One towering pinnacle of finance, in an incautious moment, said to Wyman: "Fred, my boy, in all this ruck and truck of glittering she-devils and male sharks, I fear but two people. They are Captain Lees and Vinnie Hinton. Both of them know a great deal too much." The great banker, whose rocky nature always yielded the cooling streams of Pactolus at the touch of Vinnie's bediamonded finger, sighed heavily, "They are both unnecessary evils." And yet, no stroke of divine Providence cut off either the great Detective Captain or the Queen of Anonymas in a preternatural overshadowing of men and things. It was true that Vinnie Hinton had been once gently reminded by Frederick Wyman, Esq., not to make a too free use of her private key, yet that woman with the "half cryin' brown eyes" calmly pursued "the even soprano of her way." She turned her flashing eyes on him, and a promising smile melted him.

As Wyman threw down his letters upon a table covered with the omnium gatherum of a "night off," his eyes roved delightedly over the walls wherein gleamed a treasure in superb pictures, mostly of the slightly erotic school. Exquisite bronzes and bibelots in the same lovely amatory style were shone down on by a richly frescoed ceiling

where the dimpling glories of Vinnie Hinton's still matchless physical beauty had earned the great artist, Cipriani, a five thousand dollar check from the capitalist, and also a diamond scarf-pin from the delighted lady herself. But, Wyman held the mirror up to nature itself.

At a celebrated initial private view of the fresco, the lady, with a modest self-depreciation, fixed her eyes mockingly upon her slave and master, Wyman. "I am not half as lovely as that!" she naively remarked, shyly pointing to her counterfeit presentment, with a five hundred dollar diamond-mounted parasol, a marvel of the "White House" taste.

"We must follow nature in high art, Vinnie," gallantly remarked her "lord and master" of the time, as he led her to breakfast and kissed his hand to her pictured beauties hovering there above them.

The pyramid of cigars, gold notes, invitations, opera tickets, blue poker chips and varied feminine reminders which adorned Wyman's table on this sunshiny morning oppressed the sybarite miner.

"Tony!" he cried, "what is up for to-day?" The gay little Leporello significantly waved a lace scarf caught up from a chair.

"Breakfast to-day, you promised, sir." Wyman's face instantly clouded.

"All right!" he said, after a stubborn pause. "Send over to Marchand's, and tell them to get up something nice for one o'clock in my private room. Then, come back and fix me up. Stay! bring me a brandy and soda." And, as the young leader of San Francisco's financial "haut ton" lit his first morning cigar, he murmured, "I must not have her linger around here as freely, when the big stock deals come on. Why, in Heaven's name, does not Andrew Bowen, Esq., take her over to Europe on his voyage to in-

duce the benighted Europeans to 'participate in the glories of the Comstock?"

As Wyman swiftly assumed his normal static elegance of appearance, under the deft fingers of Morani, he mused on the strange upheaval of the last ten years. Time had dealt very gently with the borderer. He was unaware as he glanced with a most critical eye at his valet's work, that he owed the cachet of his correct form and somewhat distinguished appearance entirely to the voluptuous Vinnie Hinton's severely correct taste. Through the blue cloud of his cigar, the stern-eyed capitalist slowly revolved certain conundrums ever knocking unanswered at the doors of his mind. He glanced complacently at his well-groomed hands. The varying hues of a matchless diamond, once the property of a lovely and ill-starred queen, was the one lingering mark of bonanza advertisement.

"You should give me that stone, Fred," his imperious Aspasia had one day remarked, with a just secret appraisement.

"So I will some day, Vinnie, when I get tired of it. But it always makes me think of the 'Lone Star.'"

"You may get tired of me, too," the reigning sultana softly said, with a wicked sweep of those wonderful brown eyes. The millionaire had only answered her by a glance, which brought the blood flaming to the cheeks of the peerless automatic love machine, who now shared the secrets of the Kings of the Golden Table Round.

This little episode returned to Wyman, as his eye strayed over a few marked "Personals," the grateful incense of San Francisco journalism. His name appeared in all the papers gracefully intertwined with the social, artistic, financial and fashion life of the day.

"Ah, by Jove! I must not forget Mrs. Hammond's musicale. That lovely dame is a power in the more rarefied

circles. This new singer, she of the faultless face, as usual 'a California diamond,' and, of course, Mrs. Hammond's protegée. With a sardonic smile, Wyman glanced on down to a flaming article, sounding her own praises. "She'll be the protegée of some other than Mrs. Hammond very soon if she has any go in her," was Wyman's inner thought as he reflected upon the disappearance of various "bright particular stars," whom he had missed suddenly, in the last five years of his acknowledged social prominence. They had usually turned up all right in the flesh, after describing extraordinary orbits under the hidden attraction of heavy bodies, millionaires, judiciously remaining veiled from public remark. The laws of Kepler were all at fault in the strange career of these soft-eyed, white-breasted planets of the West. It was mighty, conquering gold, which drew them down.

"So I am really one of Nature's noblemen," sneered Wyman, as he cast the papers away. A moderate gift to some current local charity had unloosed the clarion notes of the "San Francisco Bugle," a journal of the times, which did much energetic blowing, in varied keys, and sounded its suggested notes, high over the din of even these roaring Bonanza days.

"Yes, I suppose that I am all that, if they say so," grinned Wyman, "and, the social reporter will be clamoring here soon for a check, a loan, or a little favor, surely before to-morrow morning." A sudden spasm of inquiry seized the prosperous scoundrel, for his uneasy thoughts of Vinnie, the deliciously unreliable, had brought back memories of the still uncompleted title to the "Lone Star."

"I must go to work and trace out that widowed woman's history. It is safe enough now. Ten years have passed since she was carted to the City Hospital from that little den, and after all she does not count for much. But, the

girl, the girl! where is she?" Wyman rose and paced the room quickly, as he nervously glanced at his watch. He was now awaiting his broker, his man of figures, and that hawk-eyed leader of men, "Captain Bob Haley."

"This old theater fellow, McCabe, who sheltered that girl, is dead and gone, too. He died and left no sign. And, the once famous Bella Union is now merely a catch-all for tramps, sailors and hoodlums. If I only dared to trust to any one. But," and Wyman anathematized the whole social fabric, "this town is a mad whirlpool of all the floating scum of the world. Hyena men, harpy women, the refuse of the war, broken down eastern men, European adventurers, the clouded of two hemispheres, all crowd in here, to dabble their itching fingers in the golden stream. If I made any move, I would be at once blackmailed right up to the limit. Lawyers, officials, all around me, are hollow friends and, perhaps, invisible foes. And the journals, if they would ever get a hint of any weakness in the chain which hands down the ownership of the old 'Mariquita,' they, too, would bleed me to the last dollar.

"Whom have I now to fear?" the "nobleman of Nature" asked himself. "There's Hooper with all the hundreds of thousands which he has easily gained in stocks or as 'running mate' for Vinnie, he has yet gambled the whole away. He has no art to keep, to have and to hold. Some day he will surely make an awful break, of some startling character. And, will Vinnie then throw him over? She is a strange, strange, compound," the newly fledged aristocrat muttered. "The loosely worn chain of old habit still binds her to Jim Hooper. Some memory of the past years. What an unfathomed devil she is! But, no one can ever say she has twisted the reins of her chariot, reckless as she has been. No one dares to hint that she has ever opened a leaf of her many-paged Book of Life, to the

stranger eye. By God! Vinnie is game." Wyman's eye rested upon her pictured glories of matchless bodily womanhood gleaming there above him. "I believe that if she really loved a man, she would be dead game to the last, a 'stayer' to the very bitter end. There's Andy Bowen; only think of that big loafer, too, blossoming into a millionaire. He has offered to roll her in diamonds. And yet, she only laughs at him. These three people are the only dangerous ones around me. I cannot safely get any of them out of the way."

Wyman threw himself in a chair. A sudden timorous spasm seized upon him. He had so much to lose now! Though his face gleamed out in the well-kept good looks of prosperity, though his eye settled with conscious power on his inferiors, though money arrogance had curdled his egoism and stiffened his fluttering nerves, he was still a coward at heart. His teeth chattered as he thought, "If Jimmy Hooper has ever given away his old secrets, that old Truckee transaction, to Vinnie, then, she is the only one to fear; for some day, he may have to 'skip' out between two days, or else kill himself, if he's drunk enough to be reckless. I could get him easily 'done up' at any rate. Andy Bowen, rough as he is, has a very long business head, and he never would, never dare to rip up the whole details of our 'group of mines.' Besides, he has sensibly saved his money. I could consolidate with him, 'pool issues' with good old Andy, easily; but, Vinnie has the heart of a lion in that Venus-moulded, devil-inspired body of hers. With all that, her own cool, trained nerve never deserts her a moment. What a woman she would have been if she were only 'straight.'"

Mr. Wyman, sailing down the stream of his happiest years, had gained only a varied experience in much tyrannic voluptuous enjoyment, gold suggested. His

knowledge of women was only of the rosy fighters under the banner of Venus Victrix, or their feeble competitors, the prowling, overdressed social hypocrites of the doubtfully "respectable circles." Philosophy had poured forth no silver stream of wisdom for him yet. He reflected not that in the confining circle of humble duties, or the honest obscurity of a modest home, the heralded charms of voluptuous Vinnie would have been lost to the glittering world she knew. She had wisely taken her magnetic charms to the glaring display of their very best market, the Bonanza circles of San Francisco.

Wyman was not aware that opportunity makes Aspasias, that many a fair, willing Helen of Troy waits with all her glowing charms ready, only tied down by a humdrum life, and watches for the all-conquering Paris; that hordes of men, possibly exemplars of Menelaus, never dream of the unfolded passion daily folded in their arms, till occasion or disaster tears away the veil and shows the patient Griselda, her life blood bounding in repression, to be only a Bianca Capello "in futuro." But, these dreams do come even to the chaste in envious moments!

Wyman was most coldly practical in money matters. It was his one sacred obligation, the care of the golden stream now running out of the forgotten graves of luckless Devereux, and the ill-starred Berard, he of the ready revolver. He was a model "business man," and also one of Nature's noblemen. "I will keep on the right side of Vinnie," he decided, as a knock sounded at the door.

"She has probably wormed this secret of the Truckee affair out of Hooper. If she were, however, to take some cool lawyer into the magic circle 'of her adorers,' then she would be most dangerous. I must keep her out of Andy Bowen's clutches. Bah? She would not even be seen on the street with him." The name of the gray-

haired old Satan who was the great ruling "Bank's" lawyer at Virginia City, flashed over Wyman's quick mind.

"No! He's too old, too worn and faded to be Vinnie's lover, in fact he is only a 'legal adviser' to watch over her relations with her still princely exploiter." And Wyman then murmured the name of a king of finance whom even he feared, rich as he was now, in the safe retirement of his harem castle. "Some outside chap, some sharp fellow who had a grudge against me, such as a hostile lawyer, might aid Vinnie to pull me down. So Madame Graceful Graceless, you shall rule over me yet, in a way. But, I'll tie you down with rosy chains."

Wyman suddenly remembered one day, when passion still gave its thrilling zest to their real love, the day of a sharp quick quarrel, when the angry Vinnie, glaring through her veiled lashes, transfixed him as she said, "I am the one woman you should never, never quarrel with. Don't forget it, Fred." "By Jove," he cried, "that's her dangerous secret." And, so dismissing Venus to her rosy clouds, he now invoked Minerva, as he sharply cried, "Come in!" It was the hour for the daily reports.

David Brown's sixty years sat lightly on him as he bowed, pen behind ear, and then silently handed Frederick Wyman a confidential blotter. The gray old scribe's face was as impassive as stone, while Wyman pored over the consolidated figures of the day before, and then glanced at a financial schedule for the ebbing and flowing of ten hours of the fierce tiger life of the stock market. Wyman, seated at his table, sat with his rapid eye, flitting over the figures which were the trusty soldiers he daily fought his battles with. Every nerve thrilling with keen interest, he was now another man in appearance. Napoleon poring over the maps of Italy, and dreaming of Wurmser's ominously

numerous host, was no more alert than this Ishmaelite financier. For, he played his lone hand against all the world.

"Bring me out the stock ledger, David," he said in a low voice, his face growing grave.

"I shall want some checks signed also, sir," the old accountant quietly interpolated.

"How many?" queried Wyman.

"Well, about fifty. It looks to be a very lively day down town," said the bookkeeper.

Wyman's pen was flying along from check to check on old Brown's return. His face was working under a powerful internal feeling as he sharply closed the great Russia-bound check book. For fifteen minutes, the chief's pencil dashed off, note after note, as he turned the leaves of the stock ledger and gazed on the schedule of the day.

It did not seem strange to the one time tenant of the squalid cabin in Grizzly Cañon, that his own daily exchanges were now sometimes half a million dollars. For, though the extensive speculations of the Hooper, Bowen & Co. group of mines were all handled in the Exchange by the reckless and world-weary Hooper himself, the last survivor of the "Mariquita" embryo, transacted a huge private business. A series of cross-fire gambling operations had stamped Wyman as one of the very coolest heads in the human maelstrom, whose center was now at Virginia City.

Few knew that Horace Wilder, the dashing broker, he of the red rose and jaunty attire, had a private entrance to Wyman's rooms on Kearney street, neatly effected by cutting into the walls of adjoining houses; that, day by day, night by night, the two men there concerted wild, sky-rocket stock operations, to the great amazement of the ungodly; and, that the velvet-voiced Vinnie Hinton

brought a dashing life, an amazing nerve and considerable picturesque moral obliquity into these hidden councils. She had the inner voice of the ruling kings. She raised a warning finger when Wyman (left alone) would have run on the reefs of Ruin. Thankful for her guidance, he never questioned her as to the details of her prophetic wisdom; for he knew that ten years of a secret intrigue, had only deepened her hold on the great Colossus, who often stole a half hour to linger in the dim retreat on Sacramento street, where so many bright, passion-gleaming eyes had gazed on the splendors of that unique retreat. There were reigning kings in far Europe, who had never commanded the money luxury which reigned in that private sanctum à l'inconnu.

In later days, when the bare floors echoed back only the foot of the curious stranger, some mighty fascination yet lingered in those vacant halls, where the fight for millions had been carried on to the death, where a nation's ransom had been struggled for, where the concealed filaments of deadly intrigues knotted together the bright-browed daughters of fashion, who stole in on the sly, and the panther-footed lost ones, who boldly ranged in these royal shades. The shadow of past smiles, the ghosts of consenting sighs, the reflections of vanished forms, the memory-hoarded whispers of the beautiful, the wails of the betrayed, linger yet around the haunted place where every shadow to-day, has its bewitching picture of the dead and gone past, to throw "floating on the floor," in those sad days of death, silence and ruin. For there, the last rose has scattered its lifeless leaves, the wine cup will never again ring its crystal brim to a happy lover's glass, the loves and laughter of other days have vanished forever, with the mighty dead. Of all the mad passion play of the past, in this star chamber, nothing will ever be known: for the un-

broken silence of oblivion has wrapped these wild days, love-haunted, sin-stained, with the soft pall of fear, of forgetfulness and of woman's Delilah dissimulation. But, there's not a single soul, sold to sorrow and shame, there's not an easy crime led on by ringing gold or sparkling gems, there's not a mad wine-drenched hour of wickedness, which ever added to the grim renown of these beautiful halls of Eblis, which has not been paid for to the uttermost, in the blood and tears of the innocent. It is ever so!

There was a hard gleam on Wyman's face as he lifted his head and faced the silver-haired Brown. The situation of the day was an ugly one, and Frederick Wyman sprang angrily to his feet, when the scribe, in his passionless voice intoned: "A letter from the bank. They must have more collateral to-day on our overdraft amount."

"What was the limit set?" sharply demanded Wyman, though he too well knew it.

"Four hundred thousand," simply answered the old man, "and, we are at the last check, within thirty thousand of it."

"All right," calmly answered his chief. "Come back here at two o'clock. I will cut it down a hundred thousand. You can tell the cashier so. Will that do?"

"Certainly," rejoined Brown, as he went away, as unconcerned, as if to his own modest morning marketing. His brow was unruffled, his heart light, for he only played this daily game for fool's gold, at second hand, and with no added heart beat, as stocks shot up and down.

Frederick Wyman paced the floor of his room and only nodded a good morning to his private broker, as Horace Wilder entered with the ambrosial freshness of the morning on his handsome face. It was the "pious and logical" result of a night at high "poker," with Fortune smiling.

Certain "stars," who had "shot madly from their spheres," also smiled upon the struggle where a "wine supper," awaited the truce until the next seance. But, a morning drive, a dip in the surf, and an absinthe-dashed cocktail had brought up "Wonderful Wilder" to his regular form. He was gaily living along on the golden life capital of his matchless constitution. The Bank of Youth still honored his unlimited drafts. "You see, boys," he cried, "I do not care to linger on in this vale of tears 'as an old chromo,' to 'lag superfluous' on this gay and festive scene. I wish to go 'all at once' when I go, and where to? Ah! I give it up." The light-hearted broker had truly described himself, as "working the game of Life for all it was worth."

"I must put up some of my U. S. bonds," mused Wyman, thinking secretly of his narrowed "overdraft" at the tyrannical bank. He had long since laid away a secret safety hoard, the untouchable, his Tenth Legion, and, for the first time in his broadening schemes, that cash reserve was imperiled.

"I have let too much of the 'Lone Star' stock drift away out on the market," thought Wyman. "I have been putting far too many irons in the fire. I must make a break, a big break in Lone Star, and then, throw it down with a clatter. I can gather in about thirty thousand shares, if I am successful, and then up she goes again. That will hold this bank collateral all right, and I will never go so near to my limit again. But how? Dare I trust this mad fellow? For all I know, if he thought that I was weak, he might join Hooper and Bowen, and then sweep me out of the whole line. By Jove! Vinnie, too, may have such an idea. I'll sound her at breakfast. I must sweeten on her." He smiled with the air of a conquering hero. He had won that soft victory many, many times.

"Well, Horace. If you have now done looking at that passing woman," cheerfully broke out Wyman, "you can tell me how things head to-day."

"I don't like what the ten-dollar-a-week reporters call the 'financial outlook'"murmured the gay Wilder, lightly, as he availed himself of the opportunity to share Wyman's peerless cognac. "The truth is, Fred," and Wilder tried to look serious, "Giants don't stay in the cast, as giants to eternity, in this stock market here. New currents, new ideas, turn up strangely. New schemes, new lies, new panics, new plots, new swindles, all these convulse and distort. By gad, sir!" he confidently exclaimed, as he carefully trimmed a cigar, "I would as soon take a raw clerk's prophecy to-day, as the united voice of any twenty of the oldest brokers. I've been in this hubbub from the very first. I cannot travel myself underground—not yet—and I thus cannot give you the latest news from the center of the earth, but there is surely a great war of millionaires in prospect here in this confused money field. I would as soon take any one of a half a dozen of the leading claims at random as the mine of the future anywhere along Mount Davidson. I would as soon draw lots as to dare to prophesy, whether Ralston, Keene, Hayward, Sharon, Baldwin, Hobart, Latham, the Cooks, Jones, Stewart, or Flood, O'Brien & Co., will lead in this endless race across unknown country, to a nameless goal. All I can tell you is, that most of them will never leave the game with a dollar! Who will be first, who will be last, no one to-day knows! But, it's the old thing with the Derby. I don't care how many are in the field, there's only one winner."

Horace Wilder closely examined Frederick Wyman's galaxy of "personally signed" photographs of contemporary "living pictures," and then carelessly answered his friend's question, as Wyman anxiously demanded:

"Do you look for any particular great struggle or break-up very soon?"

"Oh, anything at any time. Everything goes in San Francisco's money market. I just dropped in for your orders on 'Lone Star.'"

"Hold it stiff at forty dollars. Watch it carefully. Take in all that is offered, and keep it strong. I'll be here till four o'clock, within reach," said Wyman, with a furtive smile cast toward the low, two-storied shanty where Marchand's offered the best cuisine, the choicest wines, and the very worst company, in all San Francisco. There the bright-eyed Free Lances of Folly bloomed perennial in the abandon of their characterless Nirvana.

"All right, old man," cheerfully replied Wilder. "See you at the Cliff this evening. Any news with you?"

"Yes, Haley is here, and I am going to drive him out. I may go up to Virginia for a couple of weeks. He wants me to look the mine over."

With a nod, Horace Wilder sauntered away to join in the coming devil's scramble of the morning's call. "Wyman has something on his mind, I fancy," mused the devil-may-care broker, as he revolved certain little afternoon and evening plans, intimately connected with the endless deviltries of his reckless private life. He had covered the two short blocks to his office, before his day was arranged, so as to quietly and expeditiously provide for the shattering of several of the commandments, which were, and are, a dead letter as far as San Francisco is concerned. A climatic effect, probably!

As Wyman prepared to go on his regular morning parade at the clubs he now only awaited his mine foreman, Haley. "I will drive Bob down on the ocean beach," mused the annoyed operator. "It's the only place for a safe interview within fifty miles. There, by Jove! I can head them

all off—women, reporters, gossips, stock spies, and the whole gang of busybodies."

Frederick, the faultless, smiled at himself as he approved the careful finishing work of Vinnie Hinton's golden years of friendly endeavor. His spirits rose as he thought of his matchless trotters, of the eight mile curve of that grand surf-washed beach, sweeping, brown and glistening, in the afternoon sun, from the "Cliff," down to far Point Lobos. A southerner in his love of horses, he delighted to speed along there, his cheek freshened with the crisp salt breeze, blown shoreward from the sparkling sea which broke on no shore nearer than the far islands of Japan. The great purpled cliffs above the Golden Gate gave the scene all the witchery of a fitting background, with far Tamalpais and snow-capped Monte Diablo, uplifted high above him in the clear California skies.

The "show-up" at the Cliff pleased his egoistic vanity, for crowds now craned their necks to win the honor of a nod of recognition from Frederick Wyman, "one of Nature's noblemen." In the slower "park parade," many a bright eye followed longingly the "successful man." In those gilded circles which constituted "High Society," separated by an "elastic band," alas! too easily crossed from the "unclassed," Wyman was even now regarded as the most eligible "parti" of monied society.

His future marriage strangely interested scores of full bosomed dowagers, whose falcon-eyed daughters, light of foot, and hard of heart, yearned to wear the "diamond necklace," which was supposed to be awaiting some growing rosebud of these ozone-laden western skies. "When I marry," had been the indefinite boundary of many a sly plan of Wyman's, but he had also a certain cynical skepticism as to the "staying power" of the beautiful California

girls, in whose thrilled veins an electric lava fluid seemed to bound; far quicker in its pulsing throbs than the more regulated blood of the paler eastern roses.

Several match-making mammas would have been greatly disheartened if they could have listened to Wyman's half sneer: "I think that I will stand back, and let other men take the chances on these fiery young Nourmahals." For Mr. Frederick Wyman's self-allotted path onward and upward, led him far away out over the summits of the Sierras, to the broader circles and higher glories of European society.

Physically and personally luxurious, sowing broadcast his widely-spread crop of wild oats, Wyman had easily acquired the practical dexterity of the western man in his adaptation to varied social circles, not frequently intersecting. His proud name shone in the lists of the varied clubs of San Francisco. He showed a gilded liberality in the affected charities of fashion, a judiciously regulated social advertising system was his, and a confidential intimacy with various "society leaders" of Eve's trustful sex, who "dabbled in stocks," had finally taught him the hornbook of "high life." On this particular morning, as at all important business junctures, he designed carefully displaying himself as a man of leisure at the various places, where the men "of his order" sheltered themselves from the usefully vulgar, by the "dead line" of club membership.

He had long nourished a secret plan, after skimming the financial cream to the last drop, having acquired the surface hall-mark of the gentleman, to seek a broader field of fashion far beyond the green Atlantic; but, on this particular morning, he felt again the truth of his haunting fears. "I must never leave the coast till Hooper, my bright-eyed friend Vinnie, and Andy Bowen

are all powerless to meddle with the 'Lone Star,' and drag out the weakness of the Mariquita title." And so, raising and lowering the stock, keeping control of the directory, enjoying its revenues, by skilled manipulation of the accounts and monthly yields, he stood steadily on, in his successful course. "When the public will contribute no more by general operations, I will then personally run it as an investment of my own." Led into other and outside speculations himself, Wyman felt the necessity of some brilliant coup, which would refill his coin coffers. "I need more cash reserve," he muttered, "and I must make a big turn."

"Ah! Captain Bob! Here you are," cheerily remarked the great man, as a square-shouldered, lean-faced miner of forty briskly entered the room. "Just waiting for you. I want to have a long talk with you to-day. Drive out with me at four, this afternoon. We'll go over everything, and then, we can have a quiet dinner at the Cliff."

The foreman nodded acquiescence, and stood facing his employer with both hands lightly dropped in the pockets of his sack coat. Wiry and neat, brown skinned, with a spare wolfish mustache, the cold, gray eye of "Captain Bob" was resolute and unflinching as he calmly said:

"I would have telegraphed you, but, on second thoughts, I came down myself. You are going to have some trouble about the 'Lone Star' stock, and I wanted to warn you myself. You can't trust to our ciphers, we are all bought and sold."

"Tell me now, right off. Sit down here!" cried Wyman, forgetting the man of fashion, in the cool, self-defensive speculator.

Over a cigar and a glass, Captain Bob Haley, awkwardly stroking the words out of the knees of his pepper-and-salt colored trousers, delivered himself oracu-

larly. A southwestern man of magnetic nerve, Bob Haley could handle, with a single look, the most turbulent miner. His hands had an ugly fashion of flashing two self-cocking revolvers out of those pockets, and, his co'd nerve was proverbial. To an unbroken word, a perfect, even-handed justice, and a personal liberality never denied, he added all the watchful wisdom of years of experience and also the golden charm of few words. Active, alert, energetic, and "square" on every issue, Haley's pre-eminence among mining foremen, dated from the day when, single-handed, at the "Golden Eagle" he defended the company's bullion storehouse against the sudden dash of a dozen desperate outlaws. When the quick flashes of a Winchester rifle had rung out the doom of three of their number, as they vainly tried to storm the little stone house, a sick captive miner, tied to a tree, called out with pardonable pride: "You'll never get in there. Bob Haley's inside with a spare box of cartridges!" And so, the siege was incontinently raised.

It was this same cool human machine who now said: "You have an eager enemy on your trail. Some one has been quietly buying in all the loose stock of the 'Lone Star' to be found in Nevada, and sending it down here. I can't find who is behind it, but, there's an unlimited order to buy, and the stock is all quickly shipped down here. I've got a friend or two in the express office, and I am always posted. Now, you are just within three months of your annual election. The mine's all right, still, somebody is going back on you. Look out for yourself!" Wyman sat as if stunned. His ashen face did not escape the keen eye of Bob Haley.

When the startled capitalist found words, he said slowly: "Haley, I want you to keep close here to-day, in my rooms, till I come back. Tony will attend to all your wants.

Go up to-morrow, home to Virginia, and don't you let one single human being enter that mine unless he has a private signal which I will give to you. No! It isn't Hooper or Andy Bowen," he flashed out, in answer to an inquiring glance. "They are both sound on the goose. It's some rank outsider. Now make yourself at home. I'll throw out my dragnet, and I'll soon catch this strange shark. By Heavens! I'll knife him, too when I have him in the net!" And then his blood surged away from his heart.

"Could Vinnie Hinton have played him here the double cross?" He caught his breath. She could know nothing of his current affairs. Neither Bacchus nor Venus had ever loosened the seal of his egoism. No man knew of his private finances, for, unknown to even Brown, Wyman had his secret deposit of United States Bonds, reserve moneys at Virginia City, and also, certain eastern ground-anchors carefully laid down. A running deposit account with Wilder kept that gay youth in his power as a "silent partner," and the funds in the Hooper, Bowen & Co., combination, were all that Vinnie could trace, even with the utmost duplicity. As to peeping at his books or even a paper, all the doors leading to the business department of his seraglio office, had heavy spring locks on the other side, and also secretly-placed bolts. Madame Vinnie, she of the "half-cryin' brown eyes," could only use her own golden key to enter the "sunny side," the social "spider parlor," of that Kearney street nest whose glories were now too well known to many pairs of bright eyes. "Besides," murmured Wyman, "she is royal even in her wholesome iniquity, which now fits her loosely like an easy glove. No! Vinnie has no present cause for war à l'outrance. It is some cursed outside malignant."

While Bob Haley became an interested student of bric-a-brac, the angry capitalist sauntered down slowly to the

don't forget to tell me the whole truth; the whole truth, sir, and nothing but the truth."

Wyman's protestation of worn-out platitudes resulted in a very, very pretty woman, perched on his knee, saying gently: "Fred, I will forgive all the white lies of the past. Give me now a clear, straight story." And so, while the practical siren dallied with her oysters, Wyman slowly unburdened his stormy soul. He was full of the subject, and did not notice a twinkling light in Vinnie's eyes.

"Now, I can for once give you a reward of merit," she laughed, as she affixed an improvised boutonniére, and hummed merrily, "Call me back again." "There's a very nice new necklace in the window down at 'Shreve's,' marked five thousand dollars. You should have my name most neatly engraved on the clasp, and you can also say, 'Love, the giver,' if you wish. Shall I tell you a bit of news?" Her eyes were glowing.

"Anything, anything you ask, Vinnie," hoarsely muttered Wyman. "Don't keep me waiting."

"Well then, I'll trust now entirely to your honor."

Fred nodded, and his eyes sealed the unspoken promise about the necklace. "I was down at the 'old camp ground' last night. The usual lot were there."

Wyman sprang up, for the Sacramento street golden bird-cage from whence she once came to him, a fair deserter, was so termed. "The usual lot," in her gay words, was a triumvirate so weighty as to then rule the destinies of all Nevada's silver mountains up to this very fateful hour.

"Well, your own name strangely came up. I said nothing, for they have no idea of our secret life, and, besides, the 'old Judge' was making dead love to me, while the Chiefs all talked shop." She laughed merrily. "But I

always take all their talk in quietly, on general principles." Vinnie softly smiled a triumphant smile, as Wyman's eager arms stole round her supple waist. He was kneeling at her side now, his burning eyes gleaming into her own!

"First they all raved about the 'War Hawk,' a Reese river mine they were unloading on the market. They just had received a private dispatch that the mine had been all burned out inside, and had then caved in. 'That knocks the stock from twenty down to two dollars in the next week,' growled the Duke, and then, Fred, he raved on about being terribly short on your stock, the 'Lone Star.' He wanted to borrow a lot of the stock from the other two of the big syndicates. 'Haven't got any,' was all he could get as reply from his partners, and then they all chipped in with the inside story of its being run way up in price to get a cinch on you at the next election. It appears that you blackballed a lawyer here, a man I don't know, Waldo Strong, at the Yacht Club, some time since."

"Yes, I did," hissed Wyman. "I hate the fellow! He fought me like a tiger as Vice-President of the Art Association, and, he moved heaven and earth to defeat me there. So, I got all the money men I knew to throw out his name from the Yacht Club. I have never met him, but I have good reason to hate him."

"Well," said Vinnie, "sit down like a Christian, now, and I'll finish, for I want my breakfast, sir," she laughed. "He has patched up a sort of a floating title to some of 'Jim and Andy's' outside claims. He lost money on backing our party. He wants to get even. He has got the real idea of gathering in all the loose stock of the 'Lone Star,' and then, turning you out, or investigating your management. The Syndicate said he had scraped Virginia City clean of all the loose stock, and they canvassed your own name, and all of them said you would be in a

bad hole, if this fellow Strong ever got three or four Directors. He is smart, and he has some outside money behind him now. You must have let the stock get away from you."

"Who backs him?" sharply queried Wyman.

"They don't know themselves!" simply answered Vinnie. "I was afraid that my face would betray me, and so, I made play with the old Judge, to cover up the listening dodge. That was all, and then they went on talking again about this disastrous fire in the War Hawk. I commenced to drink some wine, just for fun, with these three gay old bugs, and, the usual result, I forgot myself. I have a headache. They got me dancing and cutting up, and I did not get home; but I hope I have helped you. I know I didn't help myself!" she laughed, and drank a glass of Burgundy.

Wyman came around the table, and softly kissed the rosy partner of his easy sins. "There will be the ear-rings with that necklace. You are a game girl. So you made a night of it, you pretty devil. And, you have really given me the clue. All I want you to do for me, for the next week, is just to make it pretty public that you have stolen away with me for a few days, 'on the strictly quiet.' See these old boys down there; I want them all to know it! Stay here a couple of days, and come in and out of my rooms often; show yourself openly. Keep your carriage standing out there in front. Then, get quietly out of town. Go at night over to Alvarado and telegraph me to Virginia City. The cipher address I gave you. I will come back then with you, here openly, in a week, for I will join you there at Alvarado, on the sly. Wait there for me, blow high, blow low."

"I'll do it, Fred!" laughed Vinnie, "but, I am still only a woman. I must know all." When they had di-

vided a glass of champagne, with loving eyes gazing in her own, Wyman whispered:

"I am going up on a private engine to Virginia City at midnight. I will flatten out this chap, Waldo Strong, flatter than a pancake. And you, Vinnie, are supposed to keep me in garrison here, apparently, for a couple of days, and then, fly by night. But, load up those old boys with the story."

The man who had neither faith nor respect for womanhood, left the room an hour later, light-hearted and trusting his whole cause, the Waterloo field-day of ten years, to the amour propre of a reckless light-o'-love.

As Wyman disappeared, Vinnie Hinton followed him, for once, with admiring eyes. "He has trusted me, all in all, and I will not 'go back' on him!"

At seven o'clock, the stern-eyed Captain Bob Haley was astounded, when the panting steeds drew up at Wyman's door on the return from the twenty-mile dash, for Wyman had simply said: "Wait here, and don't show your face outside. I must go to a reception, but at sharp midnight we go to Virginia City on a special engine, and 'mum's' the word. It is for blood!"

CHAPTER VII.

Her Faultless Face.

"Captain, I have a special reason to ask you to keep closely to your room here," quietly said Wyman, as they mounted the stair. "I am watched night and day by stock spies, and the morning papers would be full of my trip if we were seen going away together. My man will serve your dinner in your rooms, and also get you anything you wish for. Next time when you come down, I will show you the town in style. I'll be back here at eleven. I have just telegraphed for an engine to wait at the Oakland wharf, ready for Truckee. We will get another one there, and the tug will be on hand at Naval Boat Landing. So, make yourself comfortable."

"All right! Don't mind me. Business is business. I'm glad enough to get back to Virginia City," curtly rejoined Haley. "I have no use for this town."

It was true. When Haley was not doing his troglodyte "specialty act," on the Comstock, his pleasures were two. One, the practice of a little confidential "poker" game of Draconian rigidity, with a few other "foremen" of mines, or else keeping up his unerring aim, by slaying "sage hens" on a Sabbath day. The gray-eyed "fire-eater" was secretly admired by all the "Camilles" of the Comstock, yet, no woman had ever sat beside him after his spectral trotter. A convenient shortness of hair saved this mighty man of the mining camp from the blandishments of the audacious Delilahs of C street. "No, sir," he promptly answered once when rallied on his lonely life.

"None in mine. I let women alone, on principle!" The "cup that inebriates while it vastly cheers," was also given the "go by." "What's the good of a walking whisky tank, anyhow?" was Haley's curt criticism. "When a man makes drinking his profession, he ought to stick to it, and let deep mining alone." So, Captain Bob Haley was not denied the crowning glory of a "spree in 'Frisco" by his lonely evening at Wyman's rooms. He spent his four hours, however, in enjoying an excellent dinner and peering into the future through the smoke of several of Wyman's best cigars. His eyes were fixed in wonder at the artistic indelicacy of certain wall pictures, only they dropped now and then to the practical, as he slapped his muscular leg, as if he would smartly extract an answer to his semi-profane query: "I wonder what the hell he is going to do now up at the mine?"

That practical problem had agitated the absent millionaire, from the very moment when he sat down to his solitary meal in his own sanctum. The disclosures of Vinnie Hinton had gravely alarmed him; moreover, they enraged him!

"Mr. Waldo Strong! I'll ——." He ground his teeth and shivered, as he studied the best method to crush the hostile son of Blackstone. Keen-eyed Tony Morani noted his master's nervousness.

"Do you want a fire, sir?" he said. But, his eyes opened in wonder, as Wyman sprang up.

"Yes, by God! That's the very thing. A fire! Yes, a fire!" the millionaire cried, and Tony, on his knees, wondered as his master poured out a terrific horn.

"You must have got a chill down at the beach. The fire will make you all right."

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"Yes, the fire will make me all right!" The valet stood aghast looking on at the unfinished dinner.

"Are you really well enough to go out, sir?" Shall I have Dr. Boland come in?" The servitor was truly alarmed, but it was only for his place. Tony knew the value of "a good thing," and had seen several of California's most promising capitalists wafted away to some "distant shore," at the beck of that veritable "pride of the West"—pneumonia. These men, "not lost, but gone before," had never, by auricular or written communication, indicated whether or not they had "struck a better place than 'Frisco." If Dr. Watts and many others may be believed (the wise, pessimistic clerical croakers), the chances were decidedly against these "sons of Belial," for they had been ruthlessly pulled-up while "going the hottest pace."

"I couldn't afford to lose this man, he's 'one of Nature's noblemen,'" said Morani, appreciatively, as he slipped out to warm a small bottle of especial Burgundy for his master. On principle, Wyman always allowed Morani to rob him, with the lofty disdain of a Grand Seigneur. "I'll more than get even, anyway, on the other fellows;" he sneered, "we are all a gang of thieves after all, out here, from the big shark to the little minnow." A just personal estimate!

Wyman recalled, while dreaming alone at the fire, Vinnie Hinton's story of the mishap at the "War Hawk Mine." "That would just be the very 'racket,' if I could only work it," he mused. "I wonder if it was a 'square' accident. If I could only throw this stock down now quickly, I could crush this parchment-faced sneak, and all of his gang. But, the "War Hawk" thing is too recent. It was not so serious after all, and, I have this cool Bob Haley to outwit, and all the reporters, and these sharp bar-

room 'experts' of Virginia City. Fire! yes, a fire! Vinnie gave me the right cue. But, it must be a real disaster—no humbug! Sudden, sharp, a serious matter. That alone will drop the stock to where I want it."

Mr. Frederick Wyman's face was ashen pale as he poured the choice wine down his throat. He only drank to distract the valet, and to cut off his voluble sympathy. "By Jove! Stop your croaking!" he cried finally. "I am not dead or dying. Lay out my dress things. I am going up to Mrs. Hammond's reception."

"At what time, sir?" queried the alert valet.

"Half-past eight," wearily answered his master. "There's going to be music. Miss—Miss Lyndon. Do you know anything about her?" Wyman eyed the spry little Machiavel keenly, as he brought in the cigar tray.

Morani was the peerless Figaro of San Francisco. Dilettante and raffiné, he was the star, par excellence, in the wicked upper circles of those pretty soubrettes, who were a fittingly lurid background to those reckless social premieres—their San Francisco mistresses. Bright-eyed, hard-hearted, neck or nothing, the suddenly evolved dames of fashion, were now "out-Heroding Herod" and "showing the way" to their startled sisters of the fast sets of the East. To use the confidential remark of one of these Madame Benoitons: "Paris was not in it, with San Francisco." Morani cast eyes of admiration to the ceiling, as if invoking the benediction of Vinnie Hinton's resplendent loveliness, glowing there above.

"Miss Gladys Lyndon, a tall perfect blonde, sir. Most lovely blonde I ever saw, sir. Always riding out with Mrs. Hammond now. See them very often in the park. Mr. Strong, the lawyer, too, along with them, often on horseback."

"Ah!" There was a steely glitter in the borderer's dark

eyes. "How long has this been going on?" Morani deftly handed the Damascus coffee cup to his master.

"Oh! a couple of months, sir. She has only given one public concert. You were away. Great success. Mr. Strong on the committee, and all that. You know he's very chummy with Mrs. Hammond, sir." Morani dropped his eyes to conceal his virtuous emotions. "I suppose that Mr. Strong is only obliging Mrs. Hammond, in this musical matter." There was an implication in his velvety tones.

"Oh! I see," cried Wyman, as Morani escaped. "Very likely he is obliging himself also, if what this fellow says is true," and his eyes bent on the dancing flames of the live oak and madrona he loved to see crackling in the fireplace. Wyman swore a deep oath. "I will lay this lawyer sneak out, crush him, and—and by Heavens! I will take the 'tall perfect blonde' away from him. Yes!" and Wyman strode up and down the room. "I will get solid with the Hammond, and then turn her against Mr. Waldo Strong. Damn him!" A charming future outlook for the lawyer!

There was a peculiarly devilish smile lurking around Frederick Wyman's sneering lips as he surveyed himself, when the admiring Morani released him from his clutches an hour later.

"The carriage is now in waiting, sir," announced the Leporello.

Wyman passed out through Bob Haley's room and startled that staid miner of fighting antecedents, with the vision of an Apollo Belvedere á la mode. "Frederick the Great" was thoroughly satisfied with himself now. He felt the peculiar rigidity of backbone which "coin" quickly imparts, and he had acquired a "noli me tangere" hauteur, which now looked haughtily over all men below him in the financial scale. As to the outer man, he had

indeed in these ten years merited Vinnie Hinton's encomiums. "I've done a good deal with you," she had murmured once in a burst of gratified womanly pride. "You now only need a foreign tour, and then a careful reimportation" she merrily laughed. "You would be swell enough for this 'western lot,' anyway, just as you are now. I have finished you!" And, many a silver-necked bottle they had "punished" to that wicked favorite toast, "To the finishing process." This was a vague reference to a trip to London, Paris, and other "worlds yet unconquered," where they would linger, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," in that sweet trance of sinful dreaming which knows no rude awakening usually, save, alas! the money running out! It is a sad and awkward fact that "delayed remittances" have broken up more of these little temporary "earthly Paradise" episodes, than all the remorse which Sunday School books describe to us as eating into the hearts of the wicked!

The ingratitude of the "tyrant man" was shown in the delightful dreams which caused Frederick Wyman to chuckle softly, as his easily-hung carriage rolled along towards the aristocratic shades of Van Ness avenue. Some imp of Satan had just suggested to him the "tall perfect blonde," as "an admirable companion" for that future voyage to Europe, to effect the "finishing" of his d'Orsay elegance.

"It would be a rare sort of a Don Juan idea —very dashing—and, the Hammond is just the very woman to help me," the capitalist mused over his easy-going relations with Mrs. Milly Hammond. "That society leader" had already several turned down pages in her remarkable "book of life," the dates of which vaguely recalled certain checks of the capitalist of the "Lone Star," marked "private account," and drawn to his "own order,"

and endorsed also by "himself." A very adaptable person, and most useful in her way to herself, the lady really merited her name of "E pluribus unum," for she was really "many in one," and, as was wittily remarked by Mr. Arthur O'Leary, of the "Clarion," she was "all things to all men."

"First, I'll lay out this Mr. Waldo Strong, and then, after I have attended his financial auto da-fé, and seen his cold ashes scattered to the viewless winds, I will induce dear, jolly little Mrs. Hammond to give a neat little private breakfast of about three persons;" so the glittering-eyed schemer dreamed. "About five hundred dollars worth of breakfast," he sneered, "with possibly another five hundred dollars worth of dessert, later!"

These mingled thoughts of love and fire, busied Mr. Wyman, until he stepped out, at the hospitable doors of the lady whose help he so confidently counted upon. "But, just how to work this little Virginia City matter, I do not as yet see," he murmured, as he gave stern orders to his coachman, and yet his brow was all smiling and unruffled, as he plumed himself proudly into the dressing-room.

He had designedly gone early to the lair of that Calypso, Mrs. Hammond, and his perfect entente cordiale with the hostess, as well as her memory of "the days that were," was evinced in the skill with which the lady piloted her visitor into the conservatory for a few moments, for he was judiciously early, the bower was dark. Provided with an excellent "running mate," who welcomed the incoming tide of guests, dashing, velvet-eyed Mrs. Hammond, panted for just a few moments in dumb show behind her thickest "invisible green" of friendly shrubs, in quick answers to Wyman's eager questions.

"You have not met Gladys? Her voice is wonderful! Such a lovely girl, and she so wishes to go to Europe,

and finish her education. Then the opera, the opera! She is a perfect wonder! a second Patti." Wyman admiringly eyed the ripe loveliness of the shapely brunette, who in gold-colored satin and black lace was a "standing temptation," as she eagerly eyed him. "Did you wish to see me for any particular business, Fred?" said Mrs. Hammond, as with flaming cheeks, she dropped her eyes suddenly under Wyman's brutally direct gaze.

"Listen," he said, "I have to go away for a few days, down country. I will only have a chance to hear your friend's wonderful voice in one song. I have a vast lot of business to finish up to-night. Now, Milly, you can't stay long with me. As soon as I come back, I want you to ask this wonderful girl to breakfast here, at your house, alone, with you and me, as if by accident. Don't forget, alone!" and, he leaned and whispered a few words which brought a benign smile to her startled face.

"All right, Fred," she laughed, as she uncoiled herself from a human tangle into which she had "accidentally" been betrayed, and then, ran away with her finger on her lips. Her eyes were gleaming with a vicious pleasure, as she turned on the step of the most conveniently arranged dead angle passage. "But, I warn you, it will be all time thrown away. She's a prude." There was a tempting resignation in her own smile.

"We will see about that," grimly remarked Wyman, as he quickly turned and sought a blossom to replace the boutonnière which had been crushed under his foot, as he stood for a moment straining his lovely hostess to his breast in that "human entanglement." With unconscious egoism he sought the rarest blossom, and, as he noted the spray of lilies of the valley lying there under his careless foot, the delicate rose-bud stained and ruined, he sneered, "Leaf by leaf the roses fall. So, this tall, perfect blonde

seems to be a frozen Venus." As the glittering steel blade of his penknife severed a fragrant bud, the deep boom of a bell smote upon his ear in solemn clangor.

"Fire! fire!" it signaled to the throbbing air of night! Wyman started with pain, for he had cut his gloved fingers to the very bone. The dismal signal had recalled Vinnie Hinton's strange story of the accident in the War Hawk mine, and it crystallized an awful purpose brooding in his mind. "Yes, yes, a fire will fix me all right!" he muttered, between deep curses, as he essayed to staunch the flowing blood. By the dint of a tight knot, he succeeded, and then, covered the wounded hand with the silken folds of his handkerchief, as well as he could.

For fifteen minutes, he debated his course. It was impossible for him now to mingle in the crowd of guests thronging the salon, from whence the preparatory notes of the accompanist were heard, high above the lively hum of what was gaily termed by the knowing, a "Californian crowd."

The social reporter (feminine), at her first glass of champagne, in the hidden coign of vantage sacred to her, had already entered in her note-book the words, "unequaled gathering of beauty and fashion." This auspicious beginning was destined to blossom out into the most glowing technical description of the marketable or marketed loveliness present, with toilet details, more or less minute, according to the liberality of the "shy sisters," who daily advertised themselves furtively, under the heading, "Society News."

Wyman, who was now much disconcerted by his accident, glowered at the hundred and fifty men and women crowding the Hammond parlors. He was searching for some Fidus Achates to aid him. "I don't care to go away till I have caught a glimpse of this wonderful

Gladys Lyndon. I would like to hear her voice, this same budding Patti. After that, when I have seen her, if it is worth my while, I will get over to the Oakland landing."

He had business now at Virginia City, of which he was again reminded by the heavy rumble of the passing fire-engines, the flaring lights and the clangor of the firemen rushing wildly along the planked streets. His eye rested on the throng of eager women faces moving in a Devil's auction parade through the splendid rooms, so seldom graced by the ubiquitous Mr. Hammond, whose absence gave to the dashing Milly a "free hand," an easy condition of which she availed herself by going it alone.

It was very well known in "high-life" society that the practical Hammond paid only a judiciously selected proportion of the family bills, leaving his gay wife "to spar around," as it was charitably termed, for the means to keep up certain "unexplained splendors." The gleam of pearls and diamonds, glitter of sapphire and ruby, flash of emerald and carven wealth of gold, decking the ardent-browed beauties of the Occidental City, were pale, colorless and faded beside the vigorous life which danced in sparkling eyes, the glow on warm ivory necks and heaving bosoms, the blue-veined arms rounded in life's entrancing youthful softness. What manner of heart beat under these deeply-swept and tastefully-arranged corsages, was immaterial to the gay, reckless men whose bold eyes needed not the halting messages of the tongue to tell their passionate stories. All was a spirited, devilish abandon to the reacting influences of the pride of the eye and the lusts of the flesh; for it was in the height of the Bonanza Days, and, only Gold was King, Silver was Dictator! Bacchus, Venus, and blind-eyed Fortune were ministers of the ceaseless pleasures which nightly followed the fierce battles of the street.

Careworn schemers forgot here their heart-eating anxieties in the smiles of the Frou-Frous who had descended, in sudden flight, a rosy band drawn from the four quarters of the whole earth, to prey here on banker, broker, Bonanza baron, and "mining man!" The gleaming rays of the Aladdin Lamp shining out from Mount Davidson had drawn from distant shores a swarm of men and women, all in the flower of youth, high-pulsed in the pride of life, whose social note-books of memory, when inadvertently opened, showed all the intrigues of reckless human nature, the lurid background of the great Civil and Franco-German wars, and all the vagaries of human pride, passion, vice, and covetousness. Every scheme known to the Robert Macaires and Cora Pearls of a dozen countries flourished here on the golden shores of the West in a generous competition of international deviltry. Codeless, historyless, heartless, reckless, the children of "Bonanza days," Folly's wantons, played at social see-saw for hearts and millions. Promoted servant-girls, other men's wives, and choice bits of feminine "crookedness," reigned in the homes of the suddenly enriched, whence the sad-eyed partner of an honest youth often went forth empty-handed, the heart-broken Hagar of an upstart Abraham.

As for the "Brokers of the Big Board," these gentlemen of leisure and pleasure, sharks by day, hawks by night, had all the efflorescent splendor of the "cast-up" American, and, pitiless-eyed, vulgar, and vain, were coldly mean at heart in their bejeweled splendor. Woe to the timid dove who struggled in the sharp claws of these human rapacidæ. Goethe, with his usual coarse ungallantry of the higher spirit, has remarked that: "When in the Devil's dance we tread, woman's a thousand steps ahead!"

The removal to another, and it is hoped, a better world,

of the great German singer, "urged on by circumstances not within his own control," prevented his personal acquaintance with these financial "stars of the West," whom he fairly antedated a hundred years. Had Johann Wolfgang von Goethe been permitted to observe the sweeping style, in which these "game chickens," the "Bonanza Brokers," went to the devil, he would have added a supplementary distich, describing the "distancing" of these unhappy women, the subjects of his song, by the California Sons of Moloch; for, no possible human competition could deprive these energetic sinners of the lurid laurels due to their speed and grim moral obliquities, —human vultures.

"The whole show here is a nice lot," sneered Wyman, intelligent and justly minded, even if withered at heart by all the routine vices of a coarse latter-day money roué. "Ah, there's Varick!" and, in response to a silent signal of distress, his club friend made his way on, past outstretched arms and kindling eyes, to where Wyman lurked in the conservatory. A simultaneous craning of necks, turning of heads and cessation of the mingled wickedness of the veiled passion play in the salons, told Wyman that the "event of the evening" was now coming on. In a few hurried whispers, the millionaire told of his plight, and Varick promptly aided him.

"Wait a few moments, Miss Lyndon is going to sing, and, when she has finished, I will bring in Mrs. Hammond to you. You can have the butler let you out of the side door and also call your carriage, and I, myself, will see to your coats and things."

"You're a good fellow, Varick," gratefully answered Wyman. "By the way, name any day after a week, when you can breakfast with me, at my rooms. I have some new pictures there which I wish to show. A

Fortuny, two Corots, and a very fair Bougereau. I have to go to Los Angeles for a few days on business."

While he entered the date in his note-book, Wyman smiled. "This fellow will tell half of these women, and all of the club men, of his 'breakfast invitation,' and, the dark schemer dreamed of a fire which was not yet lighted, as he listened to the first notes of a voice which pierced to his very heart!

"There! There! Is she not a wonder? Isn't that a faultless face?" whispered Varick, clutching Wyman's arm as he drew the young man to a corner, from whence a lovely girl of eighteen could be seen standing at the grand piano. A scowl passed over Wyman's features as he noted Mrs. Milly Hammond, the human butterfly so lately "entangled" in his arms, earnestly whispering, in a corner, with a grave-faced man of a cold, austere air.

"Is not that this lawyer chap, Waldo Strong, over there with the Hammond?" hoarsely queried Wyman, as he strove to see the hidden face of the woman whose voice now rose up in rich floods of peerless melody, bringing a rapt abandon to the faces of the crowd of worldlings; for, on the waves of that golden flood many a heart floated back to the dim but unforgotten past.

"Yes, certainly. Don't you know Strong? He's 'dead gone' on this girl. Swears he'll marry her, and all that." Wyman's heart gripped his ribs as he answered, with a smothered curse:

"No, I don't know him, and I don't care to!" As he spoke, by some curiosity of mutual repulsion, Waldo Strong turned his eyes away from the beautiful face which he had been studying, and, guided by Milly Hammond's furtive glance, sought out his hidden enemy, Wyman.

"He is not much to look at," muttered Wyman, as the spare-framed lawyer stood motionless, his passionless face

turned toward them. Beardless, prematurely yellowed with the flicker of midnight oil, a face with the thin, firm lips of the Jesuit, a mobile mouth, large and flat-lipped, a hard, stony chin, heavy, high cheek bones, and an overhanging brow, the son of Blackstone looked to be only a cold animated bundle of thoughts. His steely gray-blue eyes were as cold as the winter brook's icy flow, steady and fixed as the North Star. Deliberate, neat, and lithe in all his movements, there was little to suggest either thirty-five or sixty in his manner, save the immediate personal effect of his presence, for he seemed to disconcert and keep up those around him, to a moral nervousness.

"Looks like a human interrogation point, don't he?" sneered Wyman.

"Never mind. You keep out of the witness-box, my boy, if he has you under cross-examination. I'd sooner fry in a slow fire for a week. He tore me all to pieces a few weeks ago. 'Liar and fool, too,' he made me out, and, by Jove, I was all the while, telling the truth," laughed Varick. "Now, now's your chance. Get a good view of her face," cried the Bohemian! as the thunders of applause rang out; for the last notes of "Adelaide" had died away in lingering echoes, and Waldo Strong leaped forward, to be the very first to press the hand of the young goddess of the night. The eager glow underlying his cold, daily mask showed this Cæsar of the forum to be of that most dangerous human species, the intellectual voluptuary. A man to linger and to plot, to triangulate and weave his web, and at leisure to enjoy the futile efforts of his prey to struggle out of the environment of his practiced intellect, barring, with mathematical precision, every avenue of escape — a man to enjoy a woman in alienating her from her kind. But, the red

blood flamed up in Frederick Wyman's face, as for the first time he gazed into the face of this daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair, whose cheek bloomed in deeper roses under the congratulations of the now excited guests.

As Wyman's eyes turned to Varick to confirm the encomiums of the clubman, a cold, metallic voice near them smote in their ears: "No, sir, I never forget a face! I've seen that face before, here, in this very town, and in one of the music halls, too. She was many years younger, only a slip of a girl, and there was an old fellow who stood guard over her." As the two men moved away out of hearing, Wyman, in a quiet voice, said to Varick:

"Where did she come from, anyway? By God! It is a faultless face. You were right." His eyes were riveted upon the sweet purity of the young Diana's uplifted countenance. Her broad, noble brow was lit with the aspiration of a glorious youth. In her slender hands the roll of music trembled, as with the moulded arms drooping before her, she, with a frightened grace, answered the congratulations of the "upper circles" of the chosen city of Plutus. Golden hair in a shining coronal, robes of clinging white, and only a knot of roses on her fair breast, she was a very dream of loveliness. The original grace and freshness of her beauty shone out among the artistic triumphs of the womanly "make up" around her.

"Diana, Hebe, and Venus in one! A St. Cecilia with a dreaming heart, a nymph only waiting the touch of love to be a Venus Victrix," grandiloquently whispered Varick, as he descended to a practical answer. "She has been educated, I am told, in some institution here; she was an orphan, I believe. The Hammond dug her up. She is always on the look-out for these new lights. Gladys Lyndon is a professional name, I believe, and she turns

her eyes towards Europe. They say she is devoted to her art, extremely reserved, and of a gentle, womanly character. Rare old 'trainer' she has there in Milly Hammond. I wonder where she will land under the Hammond's tutelage. At any rate, if she is a walking mystery, she is a most beautiful one. She has a stunning face."

But, Wyman, a woman-hunter by virtue of his hot blood and fiery passions—his ardent eyes following her every movement—gazed upon Gladys Lyndon, with the eager craving of a tiger for the gazelle. It was the yearning for possession of that bright, beautiful woman-nature which flooded his throat with warm waves of choking fire, his voice thrilled as he turned away, and he clinched his wounded hand. "By Heavens! I will send her over to Europe myself. I will make a prima donna of her, if it takes the whole 'Lone Star' income for a year. And, I'll grind up this lanky pettifogger so finely that he will be helpless to meddle with her future." The evident desire of Varick to mingle in the court of the rising star led him to cheerfully pilot the hostess over to the now anxious Wyman. And yet, he must go!

In five minutes Wyman was on his way to his rooms. He had whispered to Varick, "Don't tell any one that I have gone to Los Angeles, and be sure to be on hand, for that breakfast. I want your judgment on all those pictures." Before Milly Hammond had recovered from her thrill of delight at Wyman's parting words, Varick had told half a dozen chums of Wyman's southern tour. The usual fate of secrets! But, a happy glow filled Mrs. Hammond's breast, the glow of radiant hope.

"Milly," the young mining king had impulsively said, "if you will bring that tête-à-tête breakfast off and make me 'solid' with your young friend, you can pick out the handsomest solitaire ring you can find anywhere in town. I will have it engraved, 'For a good girl.'"

"All right, Fred!" she had smiled, "and, I'll earn it; but, let me know the very moment that you return. You must come up here on an afternoon and meet her, as if by accident. I am now keeping everyone else away from her for you. Strong is the only man."

"Well, he won't be very long in my way," remarked the young Crœsus, with a grim smile, as he left the brilliantly lighted house. The fire companies were returning, jaded and tired, as Wyman's coupé picked its way down town, and a dying glow, with occasional wind-blown sparks, told of the "effective work" of the hungry flames.

"Yes! That's the very thing, a fire!" murmured Wyman. But, even in his preoccupation of a scheme which had evolved under forgotten Vinnie Hinton's "half cryin' eyes," his heart throbbed in a mad new-born passion, it was born of the distant glimpses of the radiant young goddess of song. The full tide of his years poured like molten lava through his veins, as he thought again of Gladys Lyndon, the beautiful meteor of a night. "I'll give Mr. Waldo Strong something to chase that face forever out of his mind," he swore, as he registered a vow that the girl should go to Europe under his tutelage. "And—after—after?"

"Ah! Money, enough of it, will do anything in this world," he murmured, as he drew up at his own door. "By Jove! I ought to leave some orders with Wilder. Never mind, I can telegraph to him from Truckee, and," as he entered his private hallway, a dark form advanced suddenly to meet him.

"Hooper!" exclaimed Wyman.

"Quiet! easy! old man. I want a few words with you. Vinnie told me you were going to leave town for a few days."

"So I am!" gruffly replied Wyman, who was both startled and annoyed.

"I must have a few private pointers from you, then, about the 'Lone Star,'" resolutely answered Hooper.

Wyman led the way silently to his private business conference room, and then, touching a secret bell, brought Morani in, who telegraphed by a wink, that all was ready, and Bob Haley still waiting in his agreeable social prison.

"Bring us in some whisky and cigars, Tony," quietly remarked Wyman. "Call me, then, in ten minutes! I have just that time to give you!" said the capitalist, turning and facing Hooper.

"Now! what's up with you?" roughly demanded Wyman, as he gazed at the angry broker. Time had not dealt gently with Jim the Penman. Though prosperous and overdressed, his face was hardened in the furtive, hungry glare of the professional gambler. Stocks did not always move quick enough for him, and poker, with a dash at Billy Briggs' game of "faro," often finished his nights now. Piles of "blue chips," won and lost,never brought a single change of countenance to Hooper. Drink had broadened his once fine features, and an uneasy restlessness permeated his lost social varnish. The whole man was hollowed out and undermined! It was easy to see why he only wore Vinnie Hinton's collar now, instead of playing a star engagement (in private) as Mark Antony to her Cleopatra.

Hooper broke out sullenly, as soon as he filled his glass with a shaky hand, and Morani had dexterously vanished.

"I'm worried about the 'Lone Star.' Bowen leaves me here all the drudgery of our firm. He is banging around up in Nevada, opening new mines, drawing out his money, and leaving me to keep our firm's checks good, and I am worried enough. I tell, you, Wyman, you ought not to go away now. This whole market may break. There's a giant fight going on, under the rose, here. Flood and O'Brien, for themselves; Keene and Baldwin each tackling

the whole world alone; Ralston, Sharon, Hayward and Jones, on the old lay; the Cooks, and God knows who else. Some one will surely go to the wall. Some one will either wind up a fugitive, be hauled up, or pass out! The millionaire column may reverse itself any day. You don't know who is rich. I know an old Irishman who can hardly read, who carries to-day a million dollars of stocks around in a greasy hat. Some one has got to bust!" remarked Hooper roughly, as he swallowed a second refresher. "There's not gold coin enough in America to keep these three hundred millions of par values of stocks moving on the market."

"Look here! Hooper," impatiently cried Wyman. "Get down to business! What is all this to me?"

"I want you to give me the dead tip on 'Lone Star.' I know that Wilder handles your controlling interest in that mine. It may make a difference of a hundred thousand dollars a day to me. That fellow Strong will break you, if you abandon the market." Hooper paused with an ugly look in his eye.

"Let me handle Strong and his gang," coldly answered Wyman. "That's my own business."

"And, what shall I do?" roared Hooper, wrathfully, rising.

"Cover all your sales on 'Lone Star' daily, and don't speculate in it. That's all. You'll get no news from me. Our joint account always left 'Lone Star' out. Don't play the 'baby act' on that, now!" Wyman was irritated, and hotly anxious to get away. Morani's knock resounded at the door.

"You forget that I gave you the title to that mine!" screamed Hooper, as his face grew purple. His voice died away into a groan, as Wyman, quick as lightning, pressed the muzzle of a heavy pistol against the temple of Jim the Penman.

"Damn you! Do you threaten me. I'll kill you like a dog if you breathe that word again." When Wyman dropped his hand, he was alone, for Hooper had slunk away. It was now war!

The angry millionaire quickly double-locked the open door. He did not hear Hooper's oath, "By Heavens! Vinnie shall not go away with him." He would only have laughed, for the days were gone when Hooper could dictate to the resolute free lance of soiled womanhood. Vinnie managed to carry herself along on the "broad path" with a reserved vitality and dignity, which placed her far beyond Hooper's feeble efforts at domination. "Cur and blackmailer," hissed Wyman. "I must now hold on to Vinnie, and have her watch this half crazed fellow, for he is now dangerous. His road is a short one, if he don't pull up."

In twenty minutes, muffled to the ears, Wyman and Haley watched the red light on Oakland pier, as the little tug, "Sea Lion," bored along over the waters of the silent bay, with an astonishing speed. Haley, taciturn always, caught a glimpse of Wyman's face, distorted with passion, as he gazed at the line of anchored ships. Wyman did not speak till after they had passed the low point of Yerba Buena Island. The chill air moved on the fresh dark tide and cooled the financier's heated brain. His half formed purpose crystallized into a heartless plot to ruin Strong and all his adherents, at any cost; for, besides his unslaked revenge, the eyes of Gladys Lyndon seemed to call him far away from this maelstrom of speculation at the Golden Gate. Wyman curtly said to Captain Haley, as the tug neared the Oakland pier:

"I do not wish one single human being to know that I have passed Truckee. My visit to Virginia City is a secret." Haley bowed, and then raised his eyes.

"Every one knows you, though, in Nevada."

"I'll fix that," answered Wyman.

"He is in some trouble," simply ruminated Haley, who had seen, without wonder, common miners become millionaires, and noted the man who discovered three hundred million of hidden treasures also reduced to "free drinks," and small loans. Nothing ever astonished the gray-eyed foreman. Life in the West was to him only a startling "lightning-change" act, in which he was an unmoved, passionless spectator.

But dark thoughts, and merciless resolves, filled Wyman's breast, as he sent a last viva voce order to Vinnie Hinton, by the redoubtable Morani, who disappeared in the fog as the tug cast off, murmuring: "He is surely a devil of a fellow." But, Wyman had already leaped on the waiting engine, and now "No. 69" was tearing along on the smooth steel rails, like a released red-eyed demon of the night. Two coal-tenders steadied the huge engine, and the engineer had already grinned as Wyman said, "Here is five hundred dollars in gold notes if you beat the record to Truckee." The nervy son of Vulcan sententiously remarked, "Don't put 'em up again. I'll earn them sure."

Wyman hardly turned his head, until they had reached Port Costa. The red flames of the funnel, as the exhaust forced out the sparks, recalled to him the full text of that voluptuous siren, Vinnie Hinton's story, "Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Gloomily standing on the transfer boat at Port Costa, in the black night, Wyman saw the other shore crawl up upon him as the boat seemed motionless on the inky midnight waters of the inlet. His own life, lonely and hidden from all, seemed thus to bring the dark future up to him without effort. Rich, young, cool, vicious, desperate, he had passed on from a raw boy, and penniless

adventurer, to be a money power in the land, borne along on silent tides of fortune, which had swept him far on beyond his first dark crimes. But, as in the lonely tideless arctic seas, in the blackness of the six winter months, the lonely mariners may drift, on, on, ever towards a waiting death, with no land-mark in sight, moved by hidden currents, far below, so, Wyman had floated on past every distant land-mark of human nature, with no light to guide, no beacon to steer by, on the cold black waters of his shadowed criminal egoism. There was no past to lend him its sailing code, no future lit up with hope. Cut off, pent up with the shadows of his early crimes, he was only a dark enigma, drifting, he knew not whither!

As the powerful engine leaped away on its racing run, "to beat the record," the moments seemed to crawl, though the eyes of Captain Bob Haley met Wyman's in a mute inquiry as to where they would land if they were derailed. "By heaven! I can stand it if he can. He is a millionaire," mused the foreman, as he quietly settled himself down to a nap. Haley regretted the safe pastoral conveyance, the ox team, which he had guided over the plains from "St. Joe," twenty-five hundred miles. As the huge mountain engine, tore along, shrieking and yelling through the little hamlets of the Sacramento Valley, Wyman's uneasy dreams were haunted by the faces of his own strange entourage in the whirlpool of life! Silver-haired old Brown, the scribe; Wilder, dapper and excited, ever craving new orders; rude, reckless, efflorescent Andy Bowen, a blatant millionaire "in posse;" sneaking Hooper of the unsteady eye; Waldo Strong, his now doubly-hated enemy and rival, with the ferret-eyed Morani—and a strange trinity: the ubiquitous free-lance Vinnie Hinton, the velvet-eyed Mrs. Hammond, and, seen in the glow of rosy

dreams, a tall stately girl, bending in grace, with parted, smiling lips, laughing eyes, and youth and innocence as her guardian angels.

Wyman woke with a start as the engine leaped over a half open switch, and murmured as the telegraph poles flew by in a dizzy repetition: "If I can clean this thing up, I will cut this whole circus of knaves and fools, and finish my business in Europe. It would be just as well to keep out of the way for a couple of years."

The rising gray crags and waving pines of Rocklin gave Wyman twenty minutes to refresh his shattered nerves, and the telegraph operator wondered at the cabalistic nonsense of several telegrams, respectively addressed to Brown, the cashier; to Horace Wilder, and to that prince of French valets, Morani. "Just as well to let Tony shadow Vinnie and see that she plays me fair, and also keep an eye on that cur, Hooper, but, Vinnie is only a law unto herself." It dawned upon Wyman as the engine throbbed up the rising foothills, that a brave, fearless, and, perhaps, unforgiving woman might break up the romance of the golden future, wherein the "tall perfect blonde" was already cast as "leading lady." "I will settle a handsome sum on Vinnie, an income, and thus, make her dependent upon good behavior. As for Hooper, he will soon drink himself to death, and thus rid me of one dangerous nuisance."

Ever tearing along threatening, creaky trestles, swinging round dangerous curves, the giant mountain engine sped away through the blackening night. Distant gleams of twinkling light, a thousand feet below, told Wyman of the miners' cabins below in the terrific gorges of the American River. The swaying pines wailed and soughed on the lonely Sierras, and a deeper darkness bridged the ravines where the icy brooks leaped down these channels

below him. Darker blackness than the shadowed night filled Wyman's heart. He crouched in a corner, like a beast at bay. "I must lose no time, but how, when to make the break? Can I afford to depend on Wilder, on luck, on every desperate chance?"

A worn and wearied man staggered off the engine at Truckee, as the engineer, with a grim smile, claimed his reward at four o'clock on the next morning. A second engine was already waiting on a side switch. Frederick Wyman smiled as the new engine-driver stepped up and sharply said: "All ready, sir?"

"Wait a minute," sternly ordered Wyman, as he sent Bob Haley into the squalid bar-room for some bottles of whisky and cold food. "Come out in the round house with me," said the capitalist to the man who had beat the record. They stood in the dark shed where twenty locomotives were backed up waiting orders. "Here's your five hundred dollars," cried Wyman, "and another hundred when you get out of those working clothes." The burly engineer stripped his blue jacket and over trousers in an instant. "I want the cap, too," laughed Frederick, the sly, as he handed a ten-dollar hat to the astonished operative.

"Good-bye and good luck," roared the engineer. "You will make New York in three days if you keep it up." But, Wyman did not hear him, he had grasped a double handful of the hanging soot from the walls and washed his face with the floating carbon dust. Captain Bob Haley yelled, "Where's Wyman," as he jumped on the fresh engine in answer to his unseen master's voice.

"Silence!" roared the capitalist, who was at his side, now a typical fireman, and Haley deposited his bottles and parcels in a grim silence, as he sat down on a box thrown into the caboose. "He is a slick one. No one

would ever recognize him!" mused the wary foreman, who was now disturbed at heart. "Some scheme, some queer game," he muttered, and did not speak till the strained locomotive snorted around the base of Mount Davidson at eleven o'clock on a sunny morning. The track was clear, and, at a signal, the engineer halted at the head of a long switch a half mile below Virginia City.

The smokestack of the "Lone Star" mill could be seen six hundred yards down the gully. The engine driver's eyes met Wyman's in a look of mute understanding, a last pledge. Haley never knew that a simple card in his pocket bore an address where a thousand dollars waited a still-tongued man, a month later, in San Francisco. It was a mystery of later years to the foreman how engine No. 236 was side-tracked, with fires banked, on mysterious orders at Gold Hill, to await the departure of a "gentleman tired of mountain life." But, honest Captain Bob never learned the whole story.

"Let us walk down the cañon. I wish no one to see me," sharply cried Wyman, as he plunged down the bank, and the engine backed away around the curve. Sullen and annoyed was Captain Bob as he unlocked the door of his private office at the mine and faced his employer. The little den was hidden out of the way, where the noise of the works and the rude frolic of the men's boarding-house would not break in upon the dignity of the foreman. Wyman had in his hand only a light traveling bag, and he gazed earnestly at his watch, as he faced Haley. "I wish to go alone into the mine and go down to the lower level, when the shift changes after dinner. I will then spend the afternoon in this rig. No one will know me." Wyman smiled. "Now, you can show yourself around a few minutes, I will go into the old tunnel, and ring the bell at the 200-foot station. Let the engineer send you down

alone, and you can wait for me there. Not a soul in Virginia must know of my visit!"

There were a thousand idle conjectures in Haley's mind, as he wandered away to the hoisting works alone. "He always was a queer, silent fellow. I suppose that he is uneasy about the ore, and wants to see it for himself." The foreman knew that Wyman, from his private map and weekly corrected plan of the mine, knew every single cranny of the workings. Even he did not know that Wyman had resolutely worked away from the richest ore toward the south from the main shaft, and left unexplored grounds to cut off all connection with the barren grounds of the Hooper, Bowen & Co. false leads, long since left "in statu quo"— permanent investments. "We ought to look at the best place for a connection with the other mines of the lead, by-and-by, to-day," Haley had said, as he slumped away. "All right I will think it over," was the stern employer's rejoinder.

It was a half hour later when Haley stepped out of the cage at the 200-foot level, saw Wyman, still disguised, with an old slouch hat, caught up at the office, pressed down over his brows. A twinkling miner's candle in the millionaire's hand gleamed fitfully in the darkness.

"Have you light enough?" said Captain Bob.

"Oh, plenty! All I want," answered Wyman, as Haley stepped to his side and sent the cage up. The two men were alone in the bowels of the gold-seamed rocks, where silver ledges twisted their deceitful way through the porphyry and granite.

"Haley," said Wyman suddenly in a smothered voice, "I have forgotten something. I dare not show myself here. I ordered Wilder to send me some cipher dispatches with to-day's morning board sales, at Gold Hill. I forgot that. We ran through there so quickly. Take your own

horse and drive down there, and wait at the office till you get them. I told Wilder to address them to you. I will wait for you at your office. Give me the key. Don't come back without those dispatches. Wait till you get them, for I must answer them, and then go back at midnight, or before morning. I can easily get an engine here any time."

"All right," cried the sturdy miner, as he groped his way out of the mine alone, along the tunnel. He turned and gazed at Wyman standing there as motionless as a bronze statue, waiting there with the trembling light in his hand. "Look out for yourself!" cried Haley, forgetting that Wyman knew every foot of the mine by the knowledge gained in his monthly visits.

"I'm all right. Go on," answered the owner of the "Lone Star," whose voice echoed strangely in the dripping tunnel, as gruesome as a cave of death.

Captain Haley was strangely disturbed as he drove down alone to the Gold Hill and waited several hours at the telegraph office for the dispatches which finally began to click over the wire. "I ought not to be so long away from the mine," uneasily thought the man who loved the "Lone Star" as the growing triumph of his own practical skill. He had set the thousands of timbered frames in the shafts and galleries, where they creaked under the weight of the slowly shifting rocks.

Another uneasy man was the hoisting engineer, who had run the great reel around twice in answer to signals from below and then the stage returned to the surface with no one in it! But, a dark-faced man, with a slouched hat pulled down over his eyes, had stolen out of the tunnel unobserved and fled away; an empty hand satchel was in his grasp! He cast it carelessly down an old shaft! There was a strange odor of benzine on this man's hands, which same

odor clung to all the timbering of the main shaft as that empty cage returned to the surface. A miner toiling far down in the bottom of the shaft looked up in astonishment to the hole nine hundred feet over him, where a square patch of light glimmered, as a sponge fell at his feet. Then, a wild, crazed yell resounded, as twenty-eight men fought for their lives to reach the hoisting cage. Alas! only a raging, crackling sea of flame leaped up to the surface, as the engineer above rang the alarm bell, and its mad clangor told the whole Comstock of a fire, which soon made the "Lone Star" shaft only a blazing tomb for the imprisoned men below!

"Here's your dispatches at last!" said the operator at Gold Hill, as Bob Haley, worn out with waiting, sprang to his feet and thrust the yellow envelopes in his jacket. His horse pawed at the door. "Hold on, Bob," cried the operator suddenly, with a frightened face. "This just came over. 'Send help. "Lone Star" shaft on fire. Twenty-eight men caught below.'"

Haley's horse dropped dead a half hour later, as he lashed the beast down the runway to his office. A mad mob was raging already around the hoisting works. He ran to his office door. Locked! With one vigorous kick he burst in the door. His old slouched hat lay on the table. In it a card, "Gone, 2:15; will telegraph." And, the gray-eyed foreman dropped his head on his hands and burst into tears. "My poor men. I was not here, and, now I can't get orders from Wyman."

CHAPTER VIII.

A Vanished Goddess.

Captain Haley was the very picture of gloomy despair, as he sat, late that night, in his office, surrounded by a dozen foremen of the leading Comstock mines. They were all resolute, manly fellows, who sorrowed for their brawny comrades at last abandoned to their fate. A gloomy crowd still loitered round the "Lone Star" hoisting works,' although the mine was now tightly sealed. It was, alas! the only way to prevent the destruction of the final compartment shaft. The men had been caught like caged rats there far below the flames, which had spread up and down with lightning rapidity, running along the greased guides. Stalwart Cornishmen, keen-eyed Americans, resolute Irishmen, turned away, sickened at heart, as they left the place of the disaster with bitter sighs. It was the revenge of the gnomes. As for the sympathizing miners, those fearless toilers in the service of King Plutus, it was only "Hodie mihi, cras tibi," with them. The same gloomy death might overtake them all at any time!

"Damn this mean-hearted scoundrel Wyman's economy! The shaft should have been connected by a gallery with the other mines for safety," said a stern leader of the Miners' Union. "We'll see about that, before another single man goes down. If he was here, he ought to be lynched."

At that very moment, Mr. Frederick Wyman breathed more freely, as his special engine dashed away and left Truckee, the scene of Jim the Penman's neat touches, far

behind. "Thank God," cried Wyman, now restored to his proper dress, "I am well over the California line. I am now safe." He had already dispatched to Wilder to meet him at Alvarado at daylight. "I will not go up to Virginia City again, till this thing has all blown over," mused the man who had deliberately held his candle to the benzine drippings at the mouth of the 100-foot level, without a pitying thought of the men cooped up below, whom he sent to a horrible death. "It was a lucky idea, and Vinnie is a trump," he mused. "I wonder how far the stock will break. Mr. Waldo Strong, you are now laid out for good!" The cowardly, murderous hand shook as he took a pull at his great traveling flask. It was emptied long before he reached Rocklin in the "wee sma' hours."

"See here, Haley, cheer up; pull yourself together. You are the one man in the gap," cried Superintendent Hank Wetherbee, as the foremen in council decided that at present nothing could be done but to keep the shaft sealed. "Where's Wyman? Have you heard from him?"

Haley's breast heaved convulsively. "I never killed a man before," he groaned. "That is, in a mine," he added, apologetically. For, he regarded his little homicidal exploits on the surface as only "necessary removals." They were, in fact, merely "survivals of the quickest," a practical Western proof that "delays are dangerous." And then, lifting up his head in the rough code of loyalty to his employer, he lied for the first time to his fellows. "I don't know where Wyman is. I've sent several telegraphs down for orders." For he had to keep his master's business secrets!

"This news will break the stock down to nothing," said a cautious foreman, who speculated a bit. Haley handed around a recently received telegram from Wilder. "Report extent of damage at once. Stock dropped from a hundred down to three dollars! News here that everything

is destroyed. Answer to me. Wyman not here.—Horace Wilder."

"What did you do?" queried one of the readers. Haley's face twitched.

"I answered: 'Find Wyman. Associated Press news is correct.' I did not dare say more."

"That's right! That was very prudent!" answered a chorus, and the conclave sadly broke up, several of the warm-hearted fellows agreeing to remain with Bob Haley, who made half-hourly trips to the shaft, a useless kindly solicitude.

"Keep cool, old fellow!" said a veteran miner. "It will take a week before you can open the mine, and, Wyman will surely be up here long before then."

"I don't know," gloomily answered the dejected Haley, who sullenly rose and paced the porch of the little office house, alone under the stars.

"This thing may ruin Mr. Wyman," said his friend, as Haley passed out of the door. "It has broken the stock down to nothing, you see!" Haley started, but held his own counsel. That one chance remark dispelled a vague hellish doubt of Wyman's secret purpose in the visit.

"Yes, Yes! It may be total ruin to him. It is an enormous loss as it is! The mine will be shut down for a long while!"

Bob Haley crumpled a letter in his hand and stole away into a corner of the porch where the light streamed out from the curtainless window, and then read it over again with care. It was only a hasty scrawl, from the strangely disappearing Wyman: "Just got a later message in cipher, sent to you here by my orders. I had told Wilder to dispatch any important news. Big stock panic feared in San Francisco. Will telegraph you from Truckee, and send all other orders from 'Frisco. Can get an engine at Gold Hill. I left you a card. Burn this. W—"

"Yes! It is all straight," mused Haley. He was very well aware that he knew only a tithe of his saturnine employer's many secrets. "I suppose he told Wilder how to have the messenger find him. It is very lucky that he got away unseen. The boys would have lynched him; by God, they would! He will reach San Francisco at daybreak. This may ruin him now." And with a clearer brow, Haley re-entered his office, and then wrote two dispatches. One in cipher, giving the details and asking for orders, he addressed to his master, Wyman; the other was a "tracer" to Tony Morani, who, he well knew, always "held the fort," in Wyman's absence. Wyman suffered and yet doubted Tony. The millionaire often laughed, "I am now well used to Tony's little thefts, and he likes to read all my letters. If I have any one else, or send him away, there may be some 'outside leakage.' Tony is too well paid to give me away. He only amuses himself with these little tricks; and he is silent."

At ten o'clock the next day, after a sleepless night, Captain Haley was sadly baffled when he received Morani's answer: "Mr. Wyman is away in the country. Cannot deliver dispatches. You must wait his return."

An hour later, Haley and his friendly council read Wyman's explicit orders, dated at Oakland, California. "See the news of the fire in all the morning papers. Keep the shaft sealed. Pay off the men. Come to San Francisco as soon as it is safe to leave the mine. Stop all work. Send all dispatches to Wilder."

"It is strange, very strange!" mused the foreman, who went silently about his new duties with a heavy heart. The object of Wyman's secret trip was still a mystery, but, it was not his business.

The driver of Wyman's special engine was sullen, when, under the gray coming glow of dawn, he ran down to

the head of the long mole at Oakland, where the one passenger on the engine would naturally take the boat to San Francisco. When on the side switch, he waited for orders, the man whose hands were tired with holding on to his throttle-bar all night revolted, as Wyman said:

"Signal to the train dispatcher. I want you to run me down to Alvarado, if the line is clear."

"I will not!" stubbornly cried the angry man. "I am worn out!" Wyman brought his hands up out of his pocket, filled with great double eagles, the cumbrous twenty-dollar gold pieces. The man's scowling face relaxed in a smile. "Well, of course, if you'll do the right thing," he began. Wyman laughed.

"Go ahead, now, and do your very slickest. There is a lady waiting there for news of the loved and absent."

There was no sour look on the face of the grimy engine-driver as Wyman lightly leaped from the cab, two hours later, before the quaint old hostelry at Alvarado. A man in waiting grasped Wyman by both hands, as the sun leaped over the rich hills of Livermore valley.

"Thank God, you are here, Wyman!" stammered Wilder, who showed all the effects of a sleepless night. "I must get over to the 'First Call.' The town is mad, the market is crazy; all sorts of disasters are feared, and no man's credit is safe." Wyman's lip curled with a triumphant smile, as he leaned over and whispered a word.

"Yes, she is here all right. Go right up!" The broker smiled.

"Say, Horace, get a box of good cigars and a bottle of brandy for this game engine-driver. He's had no breakfast. I'll wait for you on the porch."

As the anxious broker hurried away, the tired capitalist entered the quaint garden of the old hotel, where dreamy quiet, superb wines and noted game dinners offered in-

ducements to the "initiated," for these little "parties à deux" of the swells, who shone in the gilded sham of San Francisco's gay life. The unscrupulous Boniface only thought of his bill, and, never remembered either dates or faces. This peculiar listlessness gratified the fierce-hearted fugitives of love who always cast aside all fear and restraint in this welcome haven. The piano in the curtained parlors had often sent out witching melodies of passion under fair jeweled fingers, ostensibly busied elsewhere. But, the listening roses nodded silently under these naughty secrets, and all the world kept each other's counsel in the laughing recontres, which often brought a smile to trembling lips.

Wyman broke off a budding rose and tossed it up to a half-opened window, as a face which he had never found so fair, beamed down on him. It was Vinnie Hinton, as fresh as the very roses bending there in the golden morning sunlight, the blossoms of whose fragrance drew bird and bee to their honeyed bosoms. So, she was true!

"Well, Horace," said Wyman, as he drew up a huge arm chair, at the farthest angle of the old porch, and listened to the clink of the silver spoon, as the eager barkeeper made two special "bonanza" cocktails, "What is the news?" The broker handed to his chief the half dozen morning papers he had caught up on his trip over the Bay, on the press tug, at two o'clock in the morning.

"They will keep!" muttered Wyman, conscious that the broker was eying him very closely, "Tell me your own news?" Wyman's eager voice trembled. He longed to be alone with the frail woman, whom he had trusted, when doubtful of all besides. A boy hovered at a distance, with some fatuous remarks about "breakfast waiting, upstairs, with the lady." Wyman tossed a five-dollar gold piece to the imp, who vanished.

"Mr. Waldo Strong is busted, flat busted," gaily said Wilder, as he lit a cigar, "flatter than a flounder, and all his gang, too." Wyman drew a long breath, and drained his cocktail, as the barkeeper nodded a salutation to one of his best customers.

"That's good," sententiously remarked Wyman, who now, saw a new glory in the peaceful, sparkling morn. It seemed to him as if he had left all cares and sorrows behind in the forest arches of the Sierras, where wailing night winds behind him had whispered, "Murder! Murder!" as the locomotive dashed down the slopes into the Sacramento Valley. Wyman had hardly closed his eyes in that mad race down past the yawning chasms of the American River, and it seemed as if he had now entered into another world. For above him there, a rich voice was caroling out a song he loved, and as he closed his eyes, in a delightful day-dream, he also thought of that little breakfast under the tutelage of the velvet-eyed Hammond, where the sapphire eyes of the "tall perfect blonde" would beam into his own.

"That fool is at last out of the way," growled Wyman and he became again the alert child of Midas, as he abruptly said, "How do your books stand? How do we come out on the 'Lone Star'?" Wilder drew out a long slip, and handed it to his chief.

"There you are! We cover in all our shorts, and you have got back about forty thousand shares of the stock that was out. It gives you eighty thousand of the hundred thousand." The broker glanced at his watch. "I must get away. I want to collect every check before noon. There'll be a lot of failures to-day! A great crash is feared."

"All right," said Wyman, his eye gleaming in triumph. "You rake in anyway about twenty thousand dollars commissions, my boy."

"Yes, and a couple of hundred thousand profit in the week's work! The disaster to the 'Lone Star' carried all stocks down about five points, and I cleared up all my outstanding contracts." Wyman breathed freely, as his subordinate spoke so lightly of the sensation of the day before. It gave him the key-note for their future conversations.

"I have not slept for thirty-six hours," quickly said the man who had so coldly ruined his foes and cleared three-quarters of a million of dollars, for his own account was now four hundred thousand dollars in coin, ahead.

Scrawling a few words to Brown, the cashier, Wyman rose. "Horace!" he said, "I'll send you over some telegrams this afternoon. Report every hour to-day, by wire, and come over here on the ten o'clock train. We'll make a night of it. Bring ———," and he whispered a name which made the broker laugh, as he called for his buggy to take him down to the station. "Stay!" said Wyman, "Tell Brown not to lose a moment in taking all my stocks out of the bank. I am at last out of their clutches, and I think I'll watch this coming racket you speak of, from a distance, and then, go to Europ efor a year or so;" for Wilder had told of a coming day of wrath, sweeping down on Pine street, and doomed California street, in particular.

"Let her sweep!" was his light rejoinder. "I'll assess the 'Lone Star,' rebuild the shaft, and run the mine closer now. I will keep the public out;" for, with the whole stock swept back at a nominal price into his hands he could now open up the withheld rich deposits to the north which he had kept for his own benefit. His happiness was complete. He was unsuspected.

"It has been a great deal!" hesmiled, as he saw Wilder drive away, and then, springing up the stairs, he was clasped in a moment, in the opened arms of the pouting but delighted Vinnie Hinton.

"So, sir!" she smiled, with dreaming eyes. "I thought you were growing fast, like one of these old oaks down there in the garden." She laughed. Wyman strained her to his breast, but with a revulsion of his over-tired nerves, before a half hour, the victorious scoundrel slept under her eyes, while the witching adventuress watched the twitching of his handsome face. He had trusted her in all, and yet, Mr. Horace Wilder had privately murmured to the strange-hearted queen of light loves: "He is the blackest-hearted scoundrel in the whole world, and hanging is too good for him!" These eyes had met over their wine, for both suspected, what the sleeper alone knew, that a wholesale murder rested now on the stained soul of "one of Nature's noblemen."

Seated on the upper veranda, shaded by the climbing prairie roses of the old fashioned hostelry, Vinnie Hinton glanced over the journals which Wyman had tossed on the table. "He is a rare scoundrel," the adventuress mused, as she ran over the columns detailing the great disaster, "but if he acted on my story, about the 'War Hawk,' how could he manage to deceive a man like Bob Haley? Did that man sell his brother miners to death? Never!" indignantly protested the gay wanton, as she paced the long veranda; and, with a last pang of regret for her girlish days of honesty, she remembered Captain Haley's uniform courtesy and grave kindness on his past visits. "He is a simple fellow, brave and honest. I wonder if he really takes me for a lady. My God!" There was a bitter taste in the little morning "nip" she took to steady her nerves, for Wyman, now struggling with the demons of unceasing remorse in his sleep, shrieked and started wildly up.

"Ah! Coward, as well as scoundrel!" thought Vinnie. "If I must tie myself to a scoundrel, I do not wish one who is also a coward." And, as she approached the sleeper, who

displayed a sickly smile of nervous recovery, Vinnie murmured to herself: "Jim Hooper is true, poor fool! He loves me with the unthinking slavery of a dog, asking only what return I may choose to give. Scoundrel, but no coward, and yet, his manhood is daily drowned in the bottle. This fellow will some day surely overreach himself, and as for poor Jim, he too, will make some 'awful break.'"

"Where shall I drift to at last, into the hands of Wilder?" She smiled bitterly, for the broker had been prone at her feet in the darkened hours. "No, he is only a human butterfly. The first pin will nail him to a wall. Besides, a turn of the market may leave him stranded to toil as a clerk to one of his own promoted clerks." And, with a strange premonition of the dark days to come, she glanced at the mirror to see if the "half cryin' eyes" had lost their charm. I must change my base soon," she quickly decided. "This mushroom financial system will go soon, all to—smithereens." She laughed, as she reflected she did not exactly know the fineness of "smithereens," but, from the men she knew, the pace they made, the queen o' light loves fancied that many "heavy operators" would soon drop through the "thin ice" they skated on. For, in the free association of her life, "half within the door," the men who used her as a plaything, as an antidote against the "blue devils," talked most freely in her presence. She knew they all feared the "showing up" day, and her invariable reply to her "moneyed" adorers, when the economical fit touched them, was that "a millionaire without money was a sickening object to behold!" Yet, there were many now, who bravely wore the toga, covering very depleted exchequers. A single panic, and then, the crash!

"Vinnie!" seriously said Wyman, as he struggled to his feet, "I want you to do me a good turn." He paced

the room in deep thought. "I will take you out for a nice ride this morning. I will leave you where you can get the afternoon express. Run over to town so you can stir around among your own friends, the old boys, you know. See Morani, too. Pick up what gossip you can, and, come over for breakfast to-morrow. Find out all about the 'Lone Star' deal, about what is said on the street of me. Trace up Walter Strong and his party. Then, to-morrow, we'll run down to San José, and later return to town in style on the other side of the Bay. Now there's a good girl. Stand by me and I'll stand by you!" He drew her down to his knee, as the quick-witted woman saw he would fain send her out a bright-plumaged dove on the surface of the troubled financial waters. He was afraid. "You see," he stammered, "I want to keep out of the way for a few days. Wilder is coming over to-night, and, we have a whole lot of business." He read the half-veiled scorn in her eyes, for Vinnie Hinton justified her occasional boast "in vino veritas," that she feared neither "God, man nor the devil."

It was true, in a certain sense, for she was a queen of that class of women who break through all canting rules from the mere overplus of a passionate, overvitalized, sensuous nature. No man had ever fathomed the whole story of her life. No man knew that she had deliberately cast herself away, determined to drink of all the pleasures, which she knew were as easily within her reach as within the reach of those whom, in her girlish days, she saw raise the rosy cup, decked in easily won finery, and glittering in illgotten jewels. Pleasure was to her the one law of life, and never had she paused to ask whither the current bore her on, while the current was swift enough and laughter labored at the oar.

"I'll never forget you," the schemer pleaded, as he

clasped her hands. A hard look flashed out from the woman's eyes and her lips curled in quiet scorn.

"Don't humbug me, Fred. Of course I will go. But do you think that I believe you? How far would you follow me in trouble, in sickness, in want, if your wandering fancy changed? Dresses, wine, jewels, your second-hand caresses you may lavish on us poor women, but we know you all, the tyrant slave, the man of the moment!" Wyman looked up in some alarm. "Oh, don't be afraid, Fred. I'm dead game," said the adventuress. "Even in our nameless shadow life, our codeless soul traffic, we of the anonyma class have one unbroken mute pledge of honor. It's our poor pitiful esprit de corps. Only your 'fine ladies' who 'stoop to conquer' play the repentant sneak and the blackmailing spy."

"Why, Wyman, at these feet," and, she tapped the floor with her shapely little bronze gaiters, "many a leading citizen has told little matters, which would shake your whole social fabric, if I peached. Why should I? I am only a homeless shadow. Money, jewels, pleasure," she sneered, "I have a long lease of them yet, unless this poor face should wither. If so, I'll bother no one, for I am game to the last. But, your love, your protestations! Do you know, Fred Wyman," and she turned her flashing eyes upon him, "the colossal vanity of the thing called man is the mock of every woman like myself. You think that we sell ourselves. Not a bit! You are all only phases of the prodigal son, slaves to your reflected vanity, the sport of your own passions, the laughing stock of the woman you all think you can dupe. No! You do not care for me. You never did. You care only for yourself. You are like the rest. Man loves himself alone in such love!"

Wyman was kneeling at her side. He remembered that

she controlled the hidden secret of the man who was her galley slave, "Jim the Penman." His voice grew tender, "Vinnie, I swear that I would go through fire and water for you," he pleaded as he essayed his arts, as of old.

Her burning eyes glowed, as if lit up with an internal fire, as she coldly said:

"Would you dare to be seen in public in my company, by those women whom you call 'respectable,' your higher circles? Would you aid me to enter into any honest family, and try and leave this, this damnable life I lead?" Her eyes burned into his very soul! She laughed bitterly.

"Why, of course," he hesitated, "that is quite another matter," and then, Wyman gazed most uneasily at his beautiful tormentor.

Vinnie laughed again as she drank a glass of Wyman's best private stock. "There you are, you see. You, your class, your successors, your teachers in folly, will cringe at our feet in private, we of the shadowy sisterhood. You will break any tie, every rule of life, every commandment for us, and then whine in fear to face us in public. My dear boy," she laughed, "there is the whole humbug of life. Lola Montez amused herself with riding on a king, pick a back. Generals drag their blood-stained laurels at our feet, sages unbend, even the clergy can slip and stumble." Vinnie's smile was most deliciously dainty. "But all of these, only in the fancied privacy of this relation which you enjoy, but you dare not acknowledge. No, Fred, man, the fool, worships only himself in his mistress. Why, you, Frederick Wyman, Esq., of the Lone Star, will soon select some innocent girl to be paraded in the open as your beloved wife. How would you feel then if you met me in Paris, with your holy one on your arm? Because you turned the other way, would memory lose her fabled

grip? I think I would like to try you, my boy," and the rebellious Vinnie gayly drank her favorite toast, "Old times, Rocks!" as the startled capitalist said:

"Don't be a fool. Get your things on ready for our ride." She stood there laughing.

"See here, Vinnie," continued Wyman; "You're a good girl. Do as I ask you. There's going to be an awful crash here. Now, I will do what I can for you. If you want to do the European tour in style, count on me for the cash on call, and no one shall do it better than you, I'll promise you that."

"All right!" cheerfully remarked the fair original of his Venus fresco. "I will make fair game of the old boys to-night. I may not see them soon again! They will give you a roasting, and all that, I can tell you, but I will never cross the line, Fred. Not a word on their own affairs."

"Thank God! She is at last off my hands," remarked Wyman, as the fair one disappeared that afternoon and he caught a glimpse of a waving handkerchief, as he urged the trotters away to the hotel, for eager to gather in his harvest, he only waited the telegram of Wilder. Anxious to be busied about his own affairs, he dismissed Vinnie Hinton's little sermon from his mind. "She's been drinking, that's it, she's low spirited," he muttered. It had never occurred to him that any of the victims of his own routine passions had any human nature left, after their technical fall from womanly grace. What became of such women after they failed to please longer, was a problem he had not thought of, but, he reflected, with comfortable confidence in the power of gold, that if a particular bright face was missed, others were always ready to fill a vacant niche—the march of life, its dreadest game. "She would have been a credit if she had not gone wrong," he sadly thought, however, as Vinnie disappeared, and

yet, he never debated whether a daily struggle with neglect, poverty and family cares, and a certain heroic self-sacrifice was her personal duty, to be accepted without murmur, as a matter of course, instead of playing the companion rôle to his own, in the life of the victorious human shark.

Wyman was busied until the shades of the night, which he feared, in sending forth telegraphic orders to veil all the movements of his vast financial game of chess. He would not have smiled so unconcernedly as he did, on the closing day, could he have noted the face of the defeated lawyer, Waldo Strong, who had drawn Andy Bowen and Hooper into a dark niche of Pauper alley.

The afternoon shades were deepening on Pine street, as the passionless lawyer, for once, entirely forgot himself. "See here! The public went into the 'Lone Star' on your reputation as directors. There is some deadly swindle in this strange mishap. By heaven! It has ruined me, but I'll hunt that brute Wyman down to his death yet. I swear it! He broke down this market on purpose. I know it!" There was a desperate gleam of undying hatred, in this man's haggard eyes.

"Come and take a drink," soothingly said Andrew Bowen, Esq. "I was away, Strong," the good-humored capitalist said. "Hooper here, tells me it is a 'square thing.' You can bet that Bob Haley is no man to be in a 'rotten deal;' and, twenty-eight men were burned. Any man's life would not be worth a pin's fee in Virginia who would do that, or have it done." Bowen espied the gathering crowd. "You see," he further pleaded, "Hooper and I only hold directors' stock, ten shares each. Our own affairs with Wyman are in the other locations. No, it's the fortunes of war, Strong, and I'm sorry for you. It's California—up one day, down the other."

The two friends walked away up Pine street together, as the lawyer left them, still swearing oaths of vengeance.

"Andy," huskily whispered Hooper, "Look out for Wyman. He's a deadly scoundrel." The big Nevada giant laughed.

"Oh! He's welcome to what he can steal from me!"

"But, Hooper, stocks, you know, stocks; a man would scalp his own father, and turn him out-of-doors on a stock deal. If I were you, I would keep quiet about Wyman. There's bother enough ahead for us all. Why! I'm told even that ——— is shaky." And the name he whispered was so mighty, that its mention startled the half-drunken Hooper into other thoughts. He nursed in his bosom two special grievances, Wyman's rough threats, the memory of that flashing pistol barrel, and the unexplained absence of his own vanished goddess.

"I will be even with him yet, too, by God," swore Hooper, as he took a double cocktail alone before his solitary dinner. "I could crush the scoundrel now." And yet, he dared not speak. There was madness in the thought.

But, the cheering news of Wilder's gathering in the golden harvest, refreshed the disturbed soul of the waiting Wyman. The thousand and one rumors of the street all cleared off, and the financial field was only covered, so far, with the dead of the ruined Waldo Strong faction.

"It is a marvel how we cashed all in," cheerfully said Wilder, over their wine, as they nodded to the "veiled companion," who had arrived with the happy broker.

"There is an uneasy local feeling that something very grave will soon happen. It will be a battle of the Gods," Wyman laughed.

"I'll stay over here another day. Vinnie will be back in the morning, and I've telegraphed to Haley to come

down in three days. So, if you will have the announcements made that the 'Lone Star' will soon be equipped with improved machinery, at once reopened and properly connected with the south end mines, it will soon get us out of the woods. Say, too, that Captain Haley has been summoned down here by me to make plans for the most extensive improvements; about a thousand dollars worth of good newspaper talk."

High was the revel at the old Alvarado Hotel, while Wyman's merry mood lasted, for, his returning dove had brought to him good news which brought back the even swing of his pulses. "There's nothing at all ugly said, Fred," laughed Vinnie, "for, to tell you the truth, a big war for blood is coming on, and the 'big four' set me playing waltzes in the far end of the room, while they whispered their own deviltry. As far as I can make out it's Virginia City against San Francisco, and some one, some one, will have to go to the wall. Now, you're all right! The senator himself said you had cleaned out the Strong syndicate—horse, foot and dragoons, and that you would be a king of the Comstock, yet, if you did not lose your head. Now, that's a high compliment."

There was an added richness of tasteful diamond decoration in Vinnie Hinton's personal make up, after they had circuitously reached San Francisco, and the "lady from the country" mocked the morose Hooper, with varied stories of her wandering in fragrant fields, for even Hooper could not make her betray Wyman. Vinnie simply smiled and made no sign. It brought him blindly to her feet.

The bank books of the aged scribe, Brown, showed fat balances, which astounded even the covetous Wyman himself. Morani rejoiced in an unexpected heavy gratuity, and Mr. Horace Wilder's new "four-in-hand" was

termed "The Lone Star" by envious brokers, who still drove only modest ten-thousand dollar spans. But one cloud, and that a very dark one, rested on Frederick Wyman's mind, still casting its shadow over certain definite arrangements for that breakfast, for which Mrs. Milly Hammond was now slyly engaged in preparing the mind of Miss Gladys Lyndon.

The beautiful singer was burdened with a very sad heart. Around the path of youth, innocence and loveliness, the shadows of care already threw a gloomy penumbra. "I had hoped that I might be able to finish my operatic training in Paris. Mr. Strong had such faith in my future. He was so kind. He had even offered to help me to go, so that my mind could be at ease, while I studied; and now, he is utterly ruined, thousands of dollars worse off than nothing." Miss Gladys Lyndon's sobs were interrupted by the suave voice of Milly Hammond, speaking with a sudden alarm.

"You have not foolishly tied yourself up with him? any marriage engagement? I hope not that?" The handsome society leader closely questioned the girl with a keen scrutiny of the graceful bowed form.

"No! no! There is nothing, but it was my mainstay, his manly friendship, and your kindness. I have no other friends."

"Listen, Gladys!" soothingly remarked Milly Hammond. "I wish you to come and sing for a friend of mine, Mr. Wyman. He is deeply interested in art." Milly smiled as she thought of the floating Venus fresco on the clouded ceiling, of which, with envious eyes, she had enjoyed a "private view," "personally conducted" by "dear Fred." "I may induce Mr. Wyman to take an interest in you. I do so wish him to hear your voice." And so, the white dove fluttered gently down, softly stealing into

that trap which velvet-eyed "lady friends" have so often set for the innocence which they always despise, when their own vague regrets are deadened under their own Paris corsages. The whippers in are always pitiless!

Victory perching on the Wyman banner, the cheering reports of that soiled dove, Vinnie Hinton, the comparative quiet of all the local journals as to his name, "after Broker Wilder's anodyne," and the restoration of all his bank-pledged collaterals, made Frederick Wyman, Esq., very light-hearted, as he eagerly closeted himself with Captain Bob Haley, on the arrival of that disheartened chief of gnomes.

Wyman had already fixed a date for the little "accidental" breakfast which was to bring Gladys Lyndon into the meshes of his golden net, and so he gaily chanted a bit of a lately learned love song, "á la mode," while Haley prepared himself for the business interview.

"I'll put you up here in good shape, Captain, and you can then have a week's offtime, after we look things all over," said Wyman, as Haley went quietly to his room. The miner's face was gravely preoccupied, and his manner was seemingly sullen and depressed.

"He takes it pretty hard," the speculator mused.

Wyman gazed at his beautiful guardian demon floating there above him on the ceiling, and, contemplating the gay sisters of Joseph outside, whose coats of many colors alone, were preserved as family characteristics, sweeping by on their daily parade, he nursed an exceptionally fine cigar with a feeling of perfect comfort. "I must soften Haley down. I'll give him a big present."

"It's a good time for my European tour, a first 'prospecting trip,'" he thought, stretched out at his ease. "I have 'corraled' the whole stock, except just enough to assess, the rebuilding of the shaft on. If I have to buy

that in, I will then have the whole mine back. Cautiously opening into my best ground, paying some regular dividends, mostly to myself, I ought to be able to unload forty per cent. of the stock in the East or on the London or Paris market at very big, fancy prices. That would all drift back to me in time. I could hold on then to the mine, direct the future explorations to suit me, and so easily clear up two or three millions in time. But, I must have leisure to 'work the London market.' I must get into good Paris and London society. I can make a very good showing there, and work in on the money men from the basis of society. They would hardly believe a rough booby like Andy Bowen to be a big man out here, or in any other place. I need only two or three years now to reach my final standing, and my finances are all right now. It was a grand clean up, that fire. The best of it is, that no one suspects. And, Mr. Walter Strong, crushed once, I'll keep you under my heel. I can safely leave the mine with Haley. He's a trump. Brown is the one honest man I've struck down here. He is acclimated to it from youth! I'll pay Brown well and leave things with him and Haley. Wilder's account and the Hooper, Bowen & Co. connection, I will liquidate."

While waiting for Haley, the millionaire called in young Hopkins, and dictated a note which set Messrs. Hooper & Bowen to looking about smartly for "ready cash." The strongest partner was about to make a "move" of some Napoleonic kind, but Wyman's word was law.

"Wilder I will leave to the very last, and then let a little money lie in his hands, enough to keep his tongue still."

Glancing at a "society journal" lying before him, Wyman noted a flaring headline, "Marriage in High

Life, a Union of Hearts, Hands and Millions." Something seemed to let a ray of light into his brain, as he read the fulsomely enthusiastic screed. "Why not myself?" he smiled. "What if I were to marry some girl high up, with a powerful family backing, some one who could launch me over there and thus keep me?" He paced the floor, and, opening a little private wall safe, contemplated a picture obligingly donated by that easy-going social star, Mrs. Milly Hammond. It showed to his eager gaze the face of a beautiful girl; a delicate, noble, dreamy face, untouched by sorrow and unspotted by sin. The face of this "nobleman of Nature" glowed with the sudden, weird fire of a hidden passion, fed on its own self-created fuel. It was the young singer!

"Marriage! No, not yet," he softly murmured. "Not till I have had some little musical experience," and his face bore the delightful smile of a sleeping tiger, as Captain Robert Haley was shown in by the pert Morani. The miner stood before him with a gloomy brow.

"Tony," sharply said Wyman, "tell Mr. Hopkins no one must interrupt me now till I ring, only Mr. Brown or Mr. Wilder, and you stay out there and come in yourself. I don't want to see even them, not unless it is absolutely necessary. The captain and I have important business.

"Now, Haley, I am ready for your report," briskly said the confident millionaire, as he spread out his private note book, ready to jot down his personal comments. "Leave all the papers till later. Tell me all from the first."

Wyman's hands rested on the bundle of neat documents prepared by the company's bookkeeper, and, pencil in hand, he listened to Haley's grave monotone, as the miner did a round, unvarnished tale deliver. Haley's eyes were downcast, and his shoulders twitched as if some in-

ternal emotion mastered him. While he detailed in practical terms the whole mishap, he gave an accurate resumé of the later situation. There was not a single reference to Wyman's mysterious homeward trip, to his sudden flitting, or to the state of feeling among the five thousand men of the Miners' Union, that hidden association of the craft, which practically regulated the whole affairs of the Comstock, and tamed the insolence of the budding Bonanza kings, once their equals, for well knew the men who toiled, half naked, in the steaming depths of the Comstock lode, that no force available at call of capitalist or kaiser, in the whole world, could at once replace their own local knowledge and skilled services. They were the matchless product of fifteen years of daring experience and indomitable pluck. Man, brute, egoist and sensualist, always rises to the sublime in the dauntless front he shows to peril, the stern self-devotion of his struggle with nature, animate or inanimate. Fainting in burning deserts, clinging to the frozen "royals," with bleeding hands, throwing himself into the hell vortex of battle, facing the horrible Arctic silent ice wastes, thrusting himself into the splintered crevices of the earth, glowering in darkened prison cells, bearing the brunt of labors sufficient to affright a Hercules, soaring in the air, or groping in the bottom of the sea, "no dangers fright him, and no labors tire." Facing the ferocious giants of the forest, drifting on trackless seas, no Alp appalls, no pathless wilderness affrights, and strong-armed, tough-hearted, he reaches out, sublime in his own heart of oak, to make the impossible possible! From time immemorial, this ingrained strength and courage, has won the tremulous physical adoration of Eve's sleek-skinned daughters, who, with a thrill of passionate abandonment, a secret, unspeakable joy, hurl themselves ever gladly into the outspread arms of strength and courage.

In this self-abandonment, the filmy mesh of the moralist is broken at a single bound of the lissome-limbed children of Venus, all awakened and aglow in their wild ecstatic hero worship. No stouter hearts ever faced peril than the grim, hairy-breasted giants of the Comstock. Long after their bones are mouldered, the chorus of their ringing picks and sharp-struck drills will haunt the side of Mount Davidson in ghostly echoes, a memory of clear pluck and grit to the backbone! Warm hearted, no peril ever came upon their fellows, that volunteers did not glory in risking their own lives, unpaid, with no hope of renown, to save the life of their rude fellows.

So, "Flynn of Virginia" is no fancy sketch of the man of diamond pencil, but he has lived, he lives yet, and has his prototypes in the handsome troglodytes, who gaze with scorn at the "tenderfoot," who goes down a station or two, on a safety cage, returning to the surface to lie like a Munchausen. The talent which develops the explorer into an immediately successful "first-class liar," seems to even descend to the tourist, with his tweed suit, excursion ticket, and brazen inexperience. It is the very first heritage of travel, and was no doubt the legacy to the successors of the snake who reported that "morning call" on Adam and Eve in the garden, the first of interviewers, and "the prince of liars."

Mr. Frederick Wyman, in the full tide of his own golden fortune, taken at the flood, feared alone the Miners' Union, for well he knew that if there was a single keen-eyed man whose suspicions were aroused, not a miner would re-enter the shaft until the will of the "union" governed the future working of the mine. So, when Captain Haley finished his recital, the millionaire was keenly alert, as the foreman handed him an unpretentious note. "It is from the Miners' Union!" he said, and then

rose, and, thrusting his hand into his blouse pocket, gazed mutely out of the window.

Wyman's hand trembled slightly, as he opened the brief note. It was curt enough, but it spoke with the irresistible voice of five thousand men. The millionaire read it aloud.

VIRGINIA CITY, Nev., July 18, 1875.

TO THE OWNERS OF THE "LONE STAR" MINE,

Gentlemen: At a regular meeting of the Miners' Union, held July 12, 1875, it was ordered that no member of the Union be permitted to do any but work needful for the care and preservation of property, until the "Lone Star" is properly connected at suitable levels, for life saving, with the north or south end mines. This work to be all done before any regular shift begins extracting any ore.

Your early attention is called to this matter.

Respectfully yours,
I. H. DUGENNESS,
Secretary Miners' Union.

"Is the mine still sealed?" asked Wyman. Haley wheeled around, quick as a flash, from his post by the window.

"Yes sir!" he said, with the prompt obedience of a subordinate. "I opened it and was lowered down myself, with a safety lamp, on a slack cable wire. There is no fire now in the mine, but I resealed it for fear of a single lingering spark. There's little left to burn." His eyes were glowering, and yellow flashes lit them up, as Wyman, in a husky voice, said:

"Did you find the men's bodies? Have they been removed?"

"Nothing there to remove," answered Haley. "Only the white ashes of the live coals, which fill the shaft thirty or forty feet. The men were all down in the lower level, and, they are ashes, too, under these white ashes. The

ashes were still warm, and so, I got quickly out of the mine. Wyman shuddered, and his hand shook, as he drained a full glass of brandy. Lighting a cigar, he walked slowly up and down.

"Did you go into any of the upper levels?"

"Where I could," replied Haley. "Some of them are badly caved. The frames all burned away and let the loose rocks down. The one you came out of is choked all the way, at both ends. I tried to have a boy crawl in there. Couldn't make it." Wyman threw himself down in a chair and drew a long breath.

"I will send a formal answer to the Miners' Union, and telegraph to the secretary to-night that I will do as they wish. Now, tell me your own plans. What will you do?" The young millionaire's heart beat easier, as he noted not a single awkward reference to the secret visit. He sprang to his feet in a sudden astonishment, as Haley suddenly assumed the attitude of a man freed of bondage. Handing a closed envelope to the astonished Wyman, he said bluntly:

"I will just take a check for my salary up to this time, and then, hunt for another job." Having delivered himself of the note, which seemed to be a dreaded formality, Captain Robert Haley coolly lit a cigar, and then dropped in a loose heap, in a chair. He was now his own master, and his manner clearly showed it.

"What do you mean by this?" angrily cried Wyman, as he tossed the letter of resignation down on the table. An instant later, he regretted speaking harshly.

For, Bob Haley was on his feet in an instant. The change of Wyman's tone had touched some hidden chord, and his right hand slid, snake-like, into his blouse pocket.

"It just means that I will never set foot in the "Lone Star" again, as long as I live. I left McManus in charge

there. Everything is in order, and you can send my check down to me at the Russ House." The eyes of the two men met, and even in the supreme moment of a breathless rage, Frederick Wyman found time to remember that nothing had ever yet shaken the dauntless nerve of Bob Haley. The miner turned without a single word, and, entering the splendid suite of rooms, where Wyman had put him up, picked up his untouched hand valise.

A cold sickening feeling oppressed Wyman, as he touched the bell for Morani.

"Tony!" he said, as the lithe form of Haley appeared, sack in hand, in the door, "Call a coupé for Captain Haley, and take his valise down for him."

"Never mind, Tony," very good-humoredly said Haley, "I drove a bull team all the way over the plains from St. Joe, and, I can walk two blocks." The polite efforts of Morani to capture Haley's bag were unsuccessful.

When the street door of the private entrance closed, Frederick Wyman realized that his factotum had gone away, without even a single kindly word of parting greeting. Morani's arched eyebrows were lifted, as he busied himself in his master's room, but the sounds of a vigorous volley of oaths did not disconcert this prince of valets. San Francisco life had many such little episodes.

"Curse the fool!" cried Wyman. "He knows that I dare not go back now and face those low brutes up there;" and he then, swore a deep and bitter oath to himself. "I'll leave those ash-heaps there, at the bottom of the shaft, and I'll open the upper levels and work on my hidden ore body." The clear, steady gaze of Haley had burned a "Scotch verdict" into his own cowardly soul. "Damn him!" cried Wyman. "He can prove nothing—not a thing. I'll put the bookkeeper in charge, and then telegraph McManus down here. Some fellow will, probably, kill Haley some day, and that will let him out."

When he had seen the nimble Hopkins depart with the telegrams to the "Miners' Union," and also to the unconsciously promoted McManus, Wyman's throbbing pulses settled down again to their even click of static health. But as he robed himself for a park ride, his cheeks burned red in shame. The cool defiance of the workingman, the unspoken sentence of honest Bob Haley branded him in his own heart, as a detected coward and scoundrel.

"How much does he suspect?" gasped Wyman. "He never will, he never can know anything. Damn him! I would like to have him put out of the way." Alas! even his heated brain was cool enough to realize that no man in Nevada would dare to come to close quarters with the gray-eyed dead-shot, who was as fearless as nerve could make a man. The miners all adored him, and they were a band of Guardsmen, "one for all, and all, for one." "Some outsider," he mused. "No, I might bring up the old matters that way," and with a smiling face, he dictated a letter of eulogy to Captain Robert Haley, Russ House, San Francisco, and enclosed, besides his monthly salary, a check for one year's full earnings, "as a slight testimonial of your valuable services in the past."

It was not three hours till a hotel porter returned that portion of the money enclosure, with a great scrawl of the hotel desk-pen, defacing the neat check. It read, "Not wanted. R. Haley." But, Wyman was really triumphant, for he well knew now the silent man would not publicly brand him, and his spirits rose, when an hour later, he saw Mrs. Milly Hammond's victoria slowly moving around the band pavilion in Golden Gate Park. Turning out into the Mall, he telegraphed one quick appeal to the dashing brunette "leader of fashion." There was a victorious gleam in his dark, eager eyes, as, on the second turn, Mrs. Hammond's victoria drew also, into the oval.

In five minutes—the very essence of good form—the young millionaire approached the carriage. Even at a distance the gleaming, golden hair and graceful, girlish form told of the gentle quarry he had already marked down. Miss Lyndon was there.

"I am so glad to meet you, Mr. Wyman, to-day," remarked Mrs. Hammond, smilingly, as the young man bent low over her hand. "Gladys, my dear, allow me to present my intimate friend, Mr. Wyman. Miss Lyndon, Mr. Wyman. As Gladys is going down to Menlo Park for a week, I hope you will come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and then you may hear this 'gentle lark' in private. Your accident took you away so early from my musicale and, you naughty man, what have you been doing with my pet stock, the 'Lone Star?' I am a heavy loser with you!"

Wyman's eyes met Milly Hammond's in a glance of unfeigned gratitude, for his heart was thrilled with the nearness of the beautiful divinity who now haunted his nightly dreams. As he stood, hat in hand, by the side of the carriage, and the park orchestra gave an excellent rendition of a "Rigoletto" potpourri, Wyman did not wonder at his friend Varick's enthusiasm. In his new mètier of "rising citizen" Wyman had well used his leisure hours, and Vinnie Hinton's fragmentary musical sky-rocketing, had not been lost upon him. While they glided into an easy entente cordiale, Frederick Wyman's pulses were thronged "with the fullness of the spring," beaming in the splendid eyes shining down on him. Gladys Lyndon's low musical voice thrilled him, and he forgot himself, in his rapid, earnest self-surrender to the witchery of her presence. He failed to see the fiery glances of a royally beautiful woman glaring from behind the half-drawn maroon silk curtains of a well-appointed coupè, drawn up in the nearest line.

"Ah! Le roi s'amuse," muttered la belle inconnue, Vinnie Hinton. "It is the rising queen of song! She shines me down, I suppose. Never mind," and, with a bitterness at heart she dared not own to herself, the "queen o' light loves" whispered, "Tu me lo pagherai!" for, it was the first gleam of the coming sunset of her beauty—the first intimation that the days were coming when she would play "leading lady" no more in the mad whirl of Mr. Frederick Wyman's lurid and vicious life. At a touch of her bell, the coachman drew out, and Vinnie Hinton shuddered as the cold mist swept in from the sounding Pacific.

Turning her head, she saw the young millionaire still standing spell-bound, at the side of "La Diva Nuova." Her eyes rested last, on the tall cross, crowning the bare slopes of "Lone Mountain," rising out of the cemetery near, with its embattled army of the dead. "I am sick of this whole mad devil dance here. Anything is better than this. I want to get out of this life, far, far away!" And a singular stroke of fate awaited her, as she entered her own rooms an hour later, in the growing gloom, as Mr. James Walter Hooper, perfectly sober, and with an ashen face and haggard eyes, drew her to his side, and locked the door.

"Vinnie! Drop all nonsense!" he hoarsely said. "You must lend me your brains for a short half hour. It's a matter of life and death. Listen!" And, he told a story of shame and crime.

Wyman, in the park, lingering "under her spell," recalled himself as Mrs. Millie Hammond shivered under her India shawl. The tête-a-tête was being observed, and it did not suit her private code, for she "moved in a mysterious way" her wonders to perform.

"I will give you stock enough, at current rates, to make you think better of the 'Lone Star,'" gracefully said the

young man, as he caught Milly's telegraphic eye, "and you will think better of your faith in me, for I never desert a friend."

The gratitude of Mrs. Hammond was a factor in the waiting look of welcome for the morrow, which dismissed Wyman, with all the sweet promise of Gladys Lyndon's eyes. She mused in hopeful anticipation, as the ladies easily journeyed homeward: "My dear! only make an impression on Mr. Wyman with your singing to-morrow, and your career is made. He can do everything for you."

The fair, trusting girl dreamed then of triumphs at La Scala and San Carlo, at the Opera, the noble seat of Parisian art, at "Her Majesty's," and her fancy ran on as free and far, as the winds wailing in from the sea.

A flash, the sharp click of flying feet, and Wyman's handsome face fleeted by, his hat doffed, as the superb trotters leaped forward, level as the soaring pelican, and light-footed as the bounding deer.

"There goes one of Nature's noblemen!" enthusiastically cried the delighted Mrs. Hammond, as she thought of the schemer's enforced generosity in equalizing her losses by the unexpected fire in the "Lone Star."

Wyman, already a half-mile away, had taken up again his own bundle of cares at the park gate, and, strange to relate, his cheeks still burned, as if with the shame of an unrequited blow, when he thought of Bob Haley's contemptuous desertion. "I wonder if that brute will soon leave town," he mused, as he mounted the private stairs to his rooms, where the alert Hopkins awaited him, with a last report for the day.

"Anything new?" wearily queried Wyman, as the young man handed to him Captain Haley's note so disdainfully returning the extra check.

"Only this, sir," smartly said the handsome youth, who

was impatient to join his girl at a private dinner. "I got all the funds from Hooper, after a very strong debate. He asked for time, but I got his checks, and went at once to the banks and cashed them, so as to make sure. The times are so ticklish now. Mr. Brown has the money. I thought you would not want the checks to lie uncollected. Our own bank was closed, but he got the gold into the vault, as a special deposit."

"Good! You're a smart fellow, Hopkins," Wyman smiled. "Stay, bring me a blank check," and he then, handed the delighted youth a welcome bonus of six months' salary. "How did they pay it? I was afraid they might not come to time," the employer asked.

"Certified checks on Latham's bank," replied Hopkins, who already burned to cash his own check. There was one particular flashing diamond in a jeweler's window near, which his waiting girl coveted. "I can get around there, and have it to give her at dinner," the happy clerk mused, for he was acting the part of assistant husband for a young beauty, in whose burning veins "the climate" had poured a fiery tide of light and corrupt blood. She could not always find time to grace the "table for two" in that little private room at the "Poodle Dog," at whose door so many light feet have waited, in trembling haste, till the security of the interior left the secret of their stolen kisses safe, at least for a time, in one of San Francisco's little quiet restaurants.

Frederick Wyman sat alone gazing in mute inquiry, at the attractive loveliness of the strange woman who had ruled him, vicariously, for ten years. It seemed to him to-night poor and tawdry, even in the glowing opulence of her all too evident charms, gleaming there above him, on the florid ceiling fresco. In the full tide of the passionate delights of possession, it had never occurred to the man,

proud of the clouded social éclat of her mastery, that he might ever tire of Vinnie Hinton! But, he was restless and impatient on this night, as he twisted up Haley's returned bank check and lit a cigar with it after his dinner.

"Shall I, must I give her up now," he thought. "What am I to do with you, Vinnie?" and he glowered viciously above, and he saw the "half-cryin' eyes" shining steadily down from above. "She will be a very devil to pacify if she finds this out, this musical adventure of mine," and, on his listening nerves, strained in all the delightful anticipation of a would-be lover, the silvery voice of this unspoiled child of song, seemed to again rise in the joyous carol of her virginal freshness. The wonderful gleaming sapphire eyes were shining kindly on him from the blue cloud mists of graceful wreathing smoke. Again he could hear her low whisper:

"Till to-morrow, then. Oh, I will sing for you, yes! until you are tired of hearing me!" For hope had inspired her.

"I will not be very soon tired, I will promise you," he had most gallantly replied, but now, the throbbing pulses in every vein, told him that he only waited to see the flush of awakened passion tint that St. Cecelia face, to see a meaning thrill in her sparkling eyes, to feel her soft arms around his neck, to strain her to his fiery bosom, and to hear her murmur, "I love you, I love you."

He was swept away in this delicious dream. "By heaven, she is a woman! Not a mere worn-out shell of shapely form, fit for the automatic display of laces, jewels and hardly-earned robes. This girl shall be mine. Every smile, every sob, every sigh, mine." And, with a delicious sense of his money power, he leaned back in his chair and then murmured, "I can give her all that she wants."

Ah! How many a cold-hearted egotist has so easily summed up all a helpless woman's soul longings? Certain bodily comforts, varied gewgaws and glittering gear of the Vanity Fair booth, pleasures at call for a time, and a wilderness of wasted sighs and vain regrets, in the days when the sparkle has left the wine, and the siren's song falls flatly on the ear! Woman-tamer, roué, libertine, man of the world, cold social hypocrite, all types of the graded Silenus band, all the thick-lipped sons of Priapus, murmur in a leering underestimate, "I can give her all she wants;" and yet, my masters, never yet did woman fall so low, never yet was she so strongly swept along the tide of passion, that the victim crowned for the red banquet of sin did not murmur at last, "I would be, sometimes, treated as a woman who had not given up every semblance of womanhood in my self surrender,"—the eternal craving to keep what has been thrown away! Alas, the vanished graces!

Morani, with startled eyes, broke in on his master's delightful reveries. His finger was on his lip when he had whispered. "She's in there and, either drunk or crazy!"

"Who?" softly interrogated Wyman, clutching the valet's hand. Tony's speechless lips quivered. He then pointed with uplifted finger to the lovely picture shining down from above! Wyman stood for one moment irresolute. He quickly thought of Bob Haley's fresh insult, of Hooper, "Jim the Penman," drunken, and a now dangerous foe, and of the woman whose form he had mentally decided to order painted out, as it now gleamed threateningly above him. "But, I must not quarrel with her now," he mused, then the portiere was rudely thrown aside, and, richly dressed, as if from a banquet of the "syndicate," the woman who had coached him upwards, on his easy path to "social honors," stood before him, quivering with rage, with flashing eyes. There were rich diamonds gleaming on her

wrists; in her hair, on that breast which had pillowed him so often. She laughed defiantly as she picked up Gladys Lyndon's picture, the one so easily surrendered by that graceful Madame Pandarus, Mrs. Milly Hammond.

"Ah! Lyndon, Gladys, to be first favorite, vice Hinton, Vinnie, 'removed for cause,' you are a nice one! I saw you hanging over that stringy-looking girl's hand in the park this afternoon. Don't deny it," she said coolly, as she appropriated a cigarette, and a glass of pousse café brandy. "Your beautiful society jackal, Mrs. Hammond, is running her in for you. Fred! You're a fool!" the half tipsy woman said. "I came down here to quarrel with you, but, you are not worth the powder," she sneered. "Now I have covered up all your rascality for years. I have made a half-way gentleman of you. You now throw me over, without a single word, for that cheese-faced girl, a frozen enigma to you, whose blood may be ice-water, as well as ditch-water. She is a pauper, an adventuress. She will pay you out!"

"Stop! Stop right there!" cried Wyman, his face livid.

"Why so?" his lovely tormentor continued, "you are the very last man I fear. You are a coward, and, you know it. If you bluff me, the whole world will soon know it, too. That's a great difference to you, my boy," and Vinnie Hinton crossed her shapely legs, and blew her cigarette smoke impudently, in his face. "Your unexplored regions seem to be a fairyland to you. Va bène! you worship what you know not of—the charm of mystery. This girl you would drag down to my level. She tempts you, for she possesses yet that 'shop seal' of nature, the negative charm of unsullied virtue. Do you reflect that she may not be so ready to fall into your arms? She may wish to keep her 'ten talents' still buried in the dreamy inertia of

unspotted womanhood. But you would like to set the whole machinery of love in motion, to see the thrill of passion leaping through this clock-work, golden-love machine. Fool, the dupe of your own jaded conceit, your frosty virgin will lead you a gay dance! Now, I will gladly abdicate! I will step down and out, for,I am going to leave this gay and festive scene." Vinnie peeped from picture to picture, and tripped lightly around the room, with a studied purpose to exasperate him. He was raging with passion,under an affected calm.

"You said once, that you would do something for me, if I asked you, Fred. Do it quick then! For, I'm going away on the quiet."

"And, you'll let me alone after this?" questioned Wyman.

"You are a damned fool to ask me any questions! First, you know me to the core; second, I could lie to you if I cared to. You must now square yourself with your own sense of decency. A little money would be just now a help."

"Where are you going?" queried the frightened capitalist, as she gazed with scornful eyes at Gladys Lyndon's picture there before her, in its clinging robes of white.

"None of your business. I efface myself for good! That's the French of it, and a fact."

Mr. Frederick Wyman tapped his bell, and quietly said to Morani: "Wait here with this lady." He returned in a few moments, and then placed two compact bundles before Vinnie Hinton, when the Leperello had vanished.

"There's twenty thousand dollars in four per cent. coupon bonds, Vinnie," he kindly said. "They are good all the world over, not registered, and will net you twenty-five thousand dollars. Stay! read me off these numbers," and,while the wondering woman quickly called

off the numbers, Wyman drew up a little memorandum of a stock transaction and certified to the delivery of the bonds, by number.

"I have left the name blank," he smiled. "You can fill in any name you care to. You'll have no trouble now in negotiating them. Here is also, a little bit of pin money." Wyman placed a packet of gold notes before her. "There's fifteen hundred dollars ready money, all I had here. The banks are all shut." Vinnie Hinton stood laughing on her tip-toes, at his side. She bent down, and kissed him softly.

"Fred, you are a gentlemen, and a scholar! You are a fraud, I am a fraud, we are all frauds out here, but you have 'risen to the occasion,' as Brother Beecher would gracefully say. Now that we are quits and square, old boy, I will tell you it's a straight skip! There will be a little racket, of course, in the morning papers, but you, of all men, will keep quiet. Now, my dear boy, as they say in the drama, 'time presses!'"

Wyman caught her for the last time in his arms. He was intoxicated by the personal atmosphere, which had drawn him so often down in abject slavery to her shapely feet. He had groveled before her, worshiping her blindly in his passionate abandonment, and now that she was going, he was loth to lose this sleek, tiger-like demon of the velvet skin.

"Well, for this occasion only!" she laughed, and then, taking his head in her hands, for he had knelt once again before her, and his face was hidden in her clinging silks and laces: "I believe that you begin to be a bit sorry already. I shall be glad to remember you then as more of a fool than I thought. It is a shake and break away, but, the divided path lies forever before us, Fred. It is a case of Hobson's choice. I can't leave one man in

the world who is in trouble, for, poor apology of manhood as he is, drunken Jimmie Hooper would blow his brains out, on my door-step, if I left him in the lurch, when the tide is running dead strong against him, and so we are going to chance it together. Good luck to your white-faced girl, and you!" She turned and caught up a glass from Morani's tray, for he had executed his standing order of a chilled bottle of Pommery sec. "Here's to crime!" said Vinnie, as she gaily drained the glass and then hurled the ringing crystal into the blazing grate, where it lay unbroken. With laughing eyes she cried: "That's a piece of crazy good luck." She kissed Wyman, madly winding her arms around him. "Good-bye, Fred," she whispered through her tears, and then passed out humming softly her old refrain:

"And when, perchance some other lover,
Shall claim the heart that I resign,
And in exulting joys discover,
The charms which now are mine."

She was singing on her way down the stair which she would never tread again.

Wyman sprang after her, but the rattle of a coupé wheel told him that she was too quick for him. A great flood of old-time memories choked him, as he watched the open door where she had vanished—forever.

"Morani," sternly said Wyman, as he handed him a half handful of loose gold, "here, follow her all night, and that fellow, Hooper, too. Don't spare any money! Don't interfere, but, let me know to-morrow where they go, and all about it." The valet caught up his hat and coat and was away like a flash. Wyman dropped his head on his hands. "Vinnie!" he murmured, but he could not call her back. Her eyes, glowing on the ceiling, spoke a last, mute farewell.

It was a tribute to the fascination of the departed, that Frederick Wyman slept but little that night. "What can be the reason of this sudden flight?" he cried, and paced the floor long in doubt. He was happy to be positive that the checks of Hooper were all cashed in due order. "All is straight as a string there. What can be up?" and yet, he lingered in entire ignorance until the return of Morani, hollow-eyed and nervous, at half-past nine the next morning. The little arch devil slipped up to his master who was receiving Bookkeeper Brown's first reports.

"Mexican steamer, nine o'clock! Both disguised. Hooper and the Madame sailed—I saw them off, and gave them the slip all right. They've taken all her valuables. I guess that he has nothing of his own, and her maid is left to liquidate, and close out her 'museum' of high art."

"Never mind that change, you have well earned it," cried Wyman. "Keep a shut mouth, and fit me up now. I had my breakfast at Marchand's. Emil told me she was in there at two o'clock last night with the Senator."

"That was only a throw-off," jovially cried Morani, as he disappeared to prepare his master for the eyes of the singing lark. That breakfast!

Wyman heard the boys crying, "Extra! Extra! Failure of Hooper, Bowen & Co.! Heavy forgeries! Panic on the stock market!" in a harsh uproar, as he rode along Kearney street, with only ten minutes to spare to reach Madame Milly Hammond's golden spider parlor. Throwing the first boy a half-dollar, he glanced his eyes to the brief published accounts. "Ah!" his eyes gleamed. "She is after all the queen of the turf. I must keep silent," for the raising of certified checks to a huge amount, had been the neat trick by which Mr. James Walter Hooper had obtained the funds to pay Wyman's suddenly drawn in

account. With all remaining deposits, trust funds and the extra amount after paying Wyman, Hooper had probably "cleared out" with several hundred thousand dollars!

"I see the whole game! He intended to give me, too, the slip. But, the Mexican steamer was their only safe chance. There's no extradition treaty there. She is, of course, innocent and will transact the necessary money business and handle the secret funds. Now I am safe forever!" he exulted, "for, neither of them will ever dare to return. I will keep my own mouth shut. This is the last of the cursed 'Mariquita' business. It seals up Devereux's tomb forever!"

With glowing eyes, he rode on, his carriage spattering a shower of mud over Mr. Waldo Strong, who, anxious-eyed, was crossing on foot at Sutter street.

"I will hound you down yet, you vile scoundrel!" muttered Strong, as he turned and cursed the flying lover, already in the distance.

But Wyman was only murmuring: "Vinnie is after all a dead game girl, and I will not paint out her face on my ceiling. The form alone is worth all the money it cost. It is matchless;" and so he sighed for the departed.

CHAPTER IX.

After The Storm.

Mr. Frederick Wyman carried the impending curse of his defeated enemy very lightly, as he dashed swiftly along Sutter street on his way to the breakfast. He was, however, now confronted with a serious dilemma. His own social experience had not led him into an intimate association with many refined and innocent women. Somewhat uncertain as to the offerings at the shrine of Diana, he was at a loss how to shape his course in regard to the meeting with Gladys Lyndon. The mere fact of the field being free, the happy eclipse of the vanished goddess, these were after all but negative points in his favor, in the coming campaign. He was dimly conscious that the young singer walked far above him "on the heights." Pure and white as the edelweiss of the Alpine snow crags, the fair dove hovered far above him and, was not yet, a fond dove.

Though the Bonanza capitalist had been greatly hardened by the habitual domination of the fast set he moved in, though he was an agnostic at heart, as regarded all womanly virtue, he was nevertheless keenly intelligent. He felt that, as a matter of mere prudence, he must affect what he possessed not, some manly ardor and delicacy. His lonely life also, had militated against him. He had never met the proud, refined woman of high class in the distant border state, which his youthful rashness had driven him from. Guilty as he was, he suffered with all the "war generation" of the south, in having had no home life, no true womanly affection near him. The

coarse realism of life in Virginia City had only dragged him further down. The raffish, stuffy half elegance of the life he led in San Francisco, merely showed him the shadow side of womanhood.

Even the men of some local mark whom he met at the clubs, were vainly sensual, and most brutally direct in their personal manners. Books he was a stranger to, and the unreal glimpses of stage life which he had seen, made him but too familiar with the "blind side" of the woman nature. The opened shrine-gate of the passions, "Camille," "East Lynne," "Frou-Frou," "Article 47," and the other lurid emotional dramas suited to the western stage, had given him but the strangest glimpses of "sweet belles" jangled out of tune, the heroines were women all at war with every bright promise of their youth.

"I must go along slowly here," he mused, "and, advise with Mrs. Hammond." To this end, he drew aside that highly decorated chatelaine into the conservatory, on his entrance, and murmured an earnest request for her experienced guidance.

"You are very wise, Fred," the lady gasped, as she released herself among the roses, who blushed a bit for this and other sights they had often seen. "Gladys is coming in a few moments. Be very, very cautious. She is good, shy, and really very delicate minded. Beware of startling her inexperience. You have her respect now. It may be fanned into a warmer confidence. It rests with you to rule her heart by your princely generosity. Be very wary, though. One thing, above all, she was raised in strict seclusion. Her childhood was an unhappy one, shaded with many sorrows, so you must not blunder along into any family questions, or call up her past in any way. She was educated in an orphan institution."

"Catholic or Protestant?" quickly questioned the

miner, as he heard a light foot sounding on the stairs. Ah! the listening stag is no keener than the lover to the first sound of the coming one!

"Catholic!" gravely remarked Mrs. Milly Hammond, as her ready society smile spread out in a heavenly aureole over her anxious face. The immediate bustle of the duties of hospitality enabled her to leave the young man at once alone with the gentle singer. After a half hour, Mrs. Hammond, under her veiled lashes, looked out upon the status of the millionaire guest with secretly happy eyes, for, in an easy and natural manner, Gladys Lyndon had led Wyman on to speak of the great mining town, hanging high in air beyond the sparkling Sierras. It was a welcome topic to him. Secure in his audience, devoid of competition, he spoke well, and led the girl along into well-pictured scenes of the wild mountain life. With a sympathy which excited the passions pulsing behind his words, Wyman listened to the frank avowals of the bright-browed singer, in which her single aim of life shone out in hopeful wishes pointing far beyond the Atlantic.

It was no wonder that Frederick Wyman was led out of his bitter past, his soiled daily life, into a land of light and dreams, when the girl, with her whole heart in her voice, sang for him with a rising hope in her eyes and a craving in her lonely heart for that help which now seemed so far away, since Waldo Strong had frankly confessed his financial ruin.

Under the spell of her fresh beauty, thrilled by her voice, which found its way into the innermost recesses of his heart, his eye resting upon the rapt loveliness of her beautiful face, in its highest soul expression, Wyman was now quivering in every nerve, and tempted to cast himself down at the feet of this new goddess of youth and

life's freshest spring, when the restrained force of Mrs. Hammond broke in upon these golden moments. She entered the room with an anxious brow.

"It seemed so important, I dared not linger. Your man is here, Mr. Wyman, with a most important communication requiring immediate action." The hostess sighed as she realized the possible jeopardy of her promised diamond ring, but, with a grave bow, Wyman had now retired to the hall where Morani's frightened face called for no reproaches. Again, the unexpected!

"Mr. Wilder! Half crazy sir! You must come down home at once." And the master opening the note which his valet gave him, then turned pale, and leaned against the wall in a sudden spasm of weakness. "Come at once! The bank is in danger. You will not have an hour to act in, I am afraid, for the run is already a hot one. Looks as if the whole town was going to hell!" The scrawled name "Wilder" served to prove that it was not a passing phantasm. Leaping lightly back into the salon, Wyman approached the white queen, who had risen in alarm at his changed face.

"You will hear from me, my dear young lady, at once, through Mrs. Hammond, I have the deepest, the very warmest interest in your future career, I assure you. Let me only have the honor of meeting you here on your return." His cold hand pressed hers convulsively, and then, he stooped and picked up a rose which had fallen from Gladys Lyndon's bosom. Their eyes met, and the fair girl's cheek glowed, as he touched it lightly and reverently with his lips. "I will keep this as a pledge that I shall see you soon again." One kindly glance from her eyes told him of a newly dawning hope in that frightened girl's fluttering bosom, that her way upwards might be made smooth. When she had drawn the second breath, and

raised her eyes, she was left alone! In the hall, Wyman confusedly murmured:

"Milly, for God's sake! Hold that girl, as she is, keep my face, my interest, my usefulness, before her. I've got to race away, for the devil has broken loose!" And he whispered in her ear, a sentence, which made her reel, worldling as she was, "The Bank of California is going to fail!" Then in a hot whisper, he pleaded, "Come down to my rooms and dine with me, alone at seven. My man will wait at the private entrance." The woman's knees smote together, and her facile face crimsoned, as she faltered:

"Fred, I dare not. Think of my name, what I risk. Anything but that."

"By Heaven! I'll be your friend for life. I'll bring you home myself. I'll stand by you forever. Milly! I must have that girl for my own, my very own! I'll do anything in God's world for you." The fierce promise of his eyes was so emphatic, so passionate that the weaker one dropped her eyes at last, and murmured in a frightened whisper: "I will come!"

He snatched her hand, and kissed it eagerly a dozen times, and springing down the steps, he shouted, "to Wilder's office! On the dead run."

"Tony," he murmured hoarsely, as he turned to his man, who had leaped in beside him, at a sign, "I'll let you jump out at Kearney and Sutter; get Brown, with his bankbooks and all of his cash accounts, instantly down to Wilder's office. Don't lose a single moment for your very life!" and his own heart kept time to each spring of the maddened horses, lashed along the sloping street, until, from a half block distant, he saw an excited knot of men, checks in hand, barring the doors of the olive sandstone money palace, where King Gold had ruled for so many years with a rod of iron.

From lip to lip the fatal words flew: "The Bank of California is in danger!" and, there was a fervent zeal in Wyman's, "Thank God," as his cashier entered Wilder's back room with Morani, who had quickly caught up a couple of the office force, and then flying fingers were soon tracing checks, which Hopkins and Wilder's clerks fled away to cash at once.

Afar in the Van Ness avenue house, Gladys Lyndon sat alone, still dreaming at the piano, her slender hands wandering lightly over the keys as she played one of Mendelssohn's exquisite "Lieder ohne Worte." "He seems so good, so true, so ardent, so noble. He may perhaps help me." The girl's eyes were now very dreary, and her breast rose and fell in soft languor. She was only a friendless girl, an uncrowned Esther before a stranger Ahasuerus, and, in a timid honesty of purpose, the pearls of her soul had been cast at the feet of a stranger, whose magic gold might fare her forth to honor, to future glory, to fame, to the laurels which her fair brow dreamed of that night, on the pillow of innocence. Ah! the bright days of youth's fond dreams.

Above, in her own room, startled and roused by a nervous exaltation which carried her far away from the double life she had long led, Milly Hammond's face was haggard and anxious, as, with folded hands, she wept bitter, bitter tears, for even she, bold as she was, had now gone out beyond her depth, away out beyond the breaker line. There was no going back now, and, a spectral finger madly beckoned her on forward. "My God! to be forevermore in his power; and, Gladys!" The hollow-hearted society parasite, in a storm of tears, owned to her own accusing heart that she was cruelly leading the tender one, the gentle one, this blind Nydia of innocence, outward, downward, into the thickest gloom, into the viewless

shadows of sin. "It is a hell on earth, this sham life I lead," the velvet-eyed woman owned bitterly in this introspective hour.

And yet, the hour-glass had been turned but a few times, before, with a cautious elastic step and furtively glancing eyes, in a studied toilet of degagée elegance, Milly Hammond glided silently into the dark hallway where Morani stood on watch, awaiting her light steps. "I could not go back," she murmured, gaining courage on the stair, and Frederick Wyman, glittering-eyed and joyously happy at his recovered bank deposits, smiled in a delicious self-abandonment of pride and vanity, as he gazed at the exquisite dinner service laid for two, for his quick ear had caught the rustle of Milly Hammond's robes, and he sprang to meet her in a joy he could not conceal.

"You are the dearest little woman on the golden shore," he cried, and, strangely, Milly Hammond forgot the voice which had just waked her better nature, and the roses in her bosom were dashed with sparkling wine, as the silver chime of the clock told of the slowly drawn-out hours of that never-forgotten little private banquet. Wyman, looking in triumph into her burning eyes, saw far beyond these happy moments the sparkling gleam of the blue eyes of the queen of song to be.

San Francisco was in a wild tumult on the evening when Wyman and Milly Hammond in their stolen hours exchanged glowing glances over the wine goblet, for, while life and passion swept them on, Hopkins and Cashier Brown toiled late in the private office, Morani, guard as well as ganymede, repelled all intrusion, while a private policeman, at each street entrance, absolutely denied admittance to all. But one person had the "open sesame." It was Horace Wilder, whose twenty clerks were working all

night in running up the lightning change stock accounts of the firm's customers. Wyman gloried in the luxurious ease of his safe hiding place and the inspiring company of Mrs. Milly Hammond, who now "snatched a fearful joy" while queening it in the harem bower, which the vanished Vinnie Hinton would never more enter. Wyman, safely sheltered from the financial storm, had now told the new partner of his bosom of the definite obscuration of that bright star who had so long there ruled supreme. "It is a night of all nights to me, and, Milly, now that you have cast away your childish fears, see the future stretching out bright before you."

They reveled in the luxurious joys of these stolen hours, deliciously crowned with a guilty secret, whose thrill was enhanced by the difficulty and danger. Mobs were loud without, the tramping feet of guards and militia resounded below them, for the great bank had at last closed its doors! Their loud clang that day shook every firmly poised fortune on the golden shores. Business offices were all agleam with lights, and late into the night, toiled the anxious sons of Mammon, preparing for the doubtful morrow.

Wyman's bark rode lightly, high above the financial storm. Wilder had stolen in twice or thrice, to say that all was looking well, and to confer with the confidential workers in the outer office. "The panic will stop here, if no other banks go," whispered Wilder, "but, the king has abdicated. The noblest Roman of them all has laid down the golden truncheon. A man whose slightest wish opened every purse yesterday, is to-night seated in his half-finished palace, deserted by his fair-weather friends, and writhing in the gloom and shadows of defeat, heartbreak and woe. The king has lost his throne!"

"Did you get all your own checks in, Wilder?" anxiously queried Wyman, anxious to return to where the velvet eyes gleamed hotly for him, behind the arras.

"Oh, yes!" laughed Wilder, "I had the first private tip. For a week, I have cashed in at once all my checks on the Bank of California. I knew that it was life or death with Ralston; I took no chances."

"Why did you not tell me?" hotly cried Wyman.

"I did not dare to," said Wilder, frankly. "It might have cost me my life. I knew, too, that you were all safe. I would have warned you sooner, but the run came even quicker than I thought. For two days, in a certain office, checks were being cashed, and the coin tied up in vaults to throw Ralston down and weaken the bank, but there will be plenty of coin in town in two days! The mint is running night and day on twenty-dollar pieces, and there is the sum of nine millions in gold bars there, to be run out for 'Big Four'—your own Nevada wonders."

"And, what will become of the noble-hearted Ralston?" demanded Wyman.

"Ah! God only knows. He is the one lion in a gang of jackals, and he is being done to death in the house of his friends. By the way, Wyman, there is a secret conference to-night about those checks of Hooper's. The police can't find him, and you may be called up and questioned. See your lawyer and say nothing!"

Wyman smiled slyly.

"Thank you, Horace, I will be watching here all day to-morrow. Brown, Hopkins, Morani, will come to you, and they will have my cipher card. Trust nothing, now, but that. I have my own lawyer in here, now." Wilder fled away, as Wyman, laughing, with eager foot, sprang into the curtained room, where the soft, rounded arms of "his lawyer," drew him down to a bosom now all his own, for a common self-surrender to the wild joys of the mad hour had made them one in their purpose of drifting, drifting out on the purple tide of passion. It was enough, that one night, to taste the joys of life and love!

But the midnight oil was burned in Waldo Strong's lonely office, where his grave face shone out even graver in the shadows of the disaster, which had swept away his own fortune and left his friends wrecked. He had nothing left, save the capital underlying his care-wrinkled forehead.

Silent, stern, and noting a point here, a clue there, the cold lawyer listened eagerly to the opinions of all present at the secret conference of forger Hooper's dupes. The mechanism of the ruin of the whole Strong party was stocks, pure and simple. It could not be denied that in their own eagerness to gain control, they had driven the stock up, by bidding rashly, to treble the real value of the "Lone Star." The audacious nerve of Wyman (through Wilder), selling double the whole issue of stock as short sales, was not a new feature in the crazed antics of Californian plungers. The iron trap had fallen on them. Settlements had ruined them all, for the enormous rise had called out all the floating stock, and Frederick Wyman, in desperation, had thrown his own entire interest out on the market, breaking it to a nothing and sweeping the whole stock back in a week, with an underlying golden residuum of three-quarter of a million dollars.

There was no tangible general news of moment, save the already announced placing of a ten-dollar a share assessment on the "Lone Star," to rebuild the shaft and refit the burned-out mine; for, simple-minded Haley had gone back mutely to Virginia City, and McManus, his successor, now awaited Wyman's call in the Bay City. There was no mortal eye which had rested on the pale-faced scoundrel who lit the benzine-soaked timbers, and then fled away, alone, through the darkened tunnel. With a lightning flash, the flames had spread, leaping along the dried timbers of the double compartment. It had been only a pure loyalty to the dead, a

deep disgust at Wyman's callous indifference, which made Haley so mutely give up his trust. Every hour he gloomily thought the thing over on his way back over the Sierras. "It was my own duty to have insisted before, upon escape galleries."

But, when in the conference, all of James Walter Hooper's skillful villainy was finally unveiled, a new light gleamed now upon the past, which gave to Waldo Strong the long-missing clue. All the disgruntled capitalists, brokers and bank representatives, found in Hooper's plan only the scheme to draw together a heavy fund and disappear. As yet, the sinuous form of Vinnie Hinton was not missed in the particular "swim" which she deified, for her mysterious little disappearances were frequent matters of current history, and they strangely coincided with occasional movements of the lords of the West.

A widely diffused charity in such private matters kept all the speakers silent as to the vanished goddess, and her laughing sisters of that ilk, for each rosy light o' love went unheeded in the gay whirlpool where she listed. Hooper had craftily obtained a large number of checks for small amounts from his customers, of various plethoric bank accounts. In the usual run of large business, this attracted no special attention. They were all retained, and duly certified at the varied banks. These, most skillfully raised to huge amounts, were then deposited in his own bank. With his own checks certified on these supposed deposits, he had slyly reaped the golden harvest he garnered, to flee away with one of these very checks, for a huge amount had been paid to Wyman and as promptly cashed.

When the conclave broke up, the disheartened lawyer walked homeward, alone in the midnight, up the darkened California street, and passed the doubled militia and police

patrols. Men, fearful of the coming still morrow, lingered in anxious knots and the clash of glasses in the saloons told of rum, man's nearest comforter, his ready fiery friend in all hours, joy or woe. The dreaming, lonely street was now haunted with memories of vanished men who had given up heart, soul and character in the struggle for wealth. On the shaded recesses of the huge business palaces had hovered scores of women, bright and eager-eyed, passionate-hearted, whose life, soul and body, whose very honor and womanhood, had been crushed in the mire—under the wheels of the Juggernaut of stocks.

"I see it all!" cried the broken-hearted lawyer, as his eye rested on the huge square tower of the great Cathedral, where first he had heard Gladys Lyndon's soaring voice. "I see it all. This fellow Bowen and the convict Hooper, have evidently been fellow scoundrels with Wyman. Bowen has drawn out rich; ignorant and being timid, he has sheltered his stealings in Nevada, out of reach of our State laws. Hooper's own swindling has helped on this devil Wyman with the funds to break up our foolish combination in the stock market. The forger is now safely on his way to either Australia, Japan or Mexico; and here, before me, this villain Wyman now exults in his sweeping victory, and probably shields the desperate man who fled."

The deep boom of the Cathedral bell startled the lonely man, who unconsciously murmured "Fire!" as the midnight hour began to run off its heavy strokes. When his startled nerves resumed their balance, Waldo Strong fixed his eyes on the four great crosses, towering there far above him in the blue starlight, on the yet unfinished main tower. "That's it!" he cried, with a sudden divination. "Fire! That arch fiend caused that very fire! It sent a band of innocent men to a horrible death. It has ruined hundreds, and enriched him. It has broken my heart and

robbed me, too, of Gladys Lyndon, for how can I ever ask her to share the only Californian disgrace, honest poverty? It would doom her to the eclipse of her splendid genius." The stern man softened as he muttered, "My poor darling! There are all paths ready for your feet, shaded paths, rose bowered, and, I may not walk by your side."

All the impotence of his present position now swept over him. He paused, and lifting his hand, swore in his passionate heart to follow Frederick Wyman to the very grave!

"To-morrow, I will begin my work. I will trace back the whole past history of these three precious villains. The group of alleged mines of Hooper, Bowen & Co., was only an audacious swindle. Who fired the 'Lone Star' mine? I know that Hooper was here every day. Bowen, I saw talking over the very first news. Wyman, Wyman, he was perhaps not here." And, the lawyer stood irresolute. "I will sell my law library, but I will trace every moment of his time. I saw him only a day before at the musicale, but, there are telegraphs, ciphers, ready villains. He could have reached there on a special engine." The man's life work now came to him. A nature, never to tire and never to pardon, he vowed to follow out this grim quest to the death. "And, he is intimate with Mrs. Hammond, also. I must warn Gladys, warn her against the friend of such a wretch."

While the ruined lawyer wandered aimlessly toward his rooms, at the door of her own splendid mansion, Milly Hammond turned to say a whispered "good-night" to her host of this one happy night. The blinking butler opened the door and then shambled off, while the woman with the velvet eyes, drew Wyman quickly into the dusky drawing-room. Her eyes glowed like dusky diamonds in that friendly devil's bower, as she threw herself madly on Wyman's breast.

"Fred, I swear she shall be yours! I will do your every bidding, but,—" and her arms closed around him, "don't forget that I am a woman, too, and that I love you!" There were happy smiles wreathing the face of the elated lover who leaned back on his way home in the luxury of his splendid carriage. "Oh! She is just my one needed woman friend. Milly, the very one I need. And I will make my will to be all in all, to her. It is so easy, and Gladys Lyndon shall have a musical career. I will set Milly quietly at work at once."

For, he had already in the soft dalliance of that little private dinner showed Milly Hammond how to lime the trap for the soft, fair dove with shining eyes. "I give you free hand as to all details and my carte blanche backing. Don't startle her, for you must succeed, and, when that girl is mine, your own future is a golden one. I am, then, your standby for life." "Through all, to the very last?" the eager woman had queried. "To the very last," Wyman had replied, sealing his oath with hot kisses rained on the lips of the woman who had now whistled all regret down the wind, for, the future stretched out rosy and fair for Milly Hammond—the friendship of one of Nature's noblemen. It was a very tower of strength to her tottering fortunes!

The day after Wyman's unholy compact with his married dupe, was one of unexampled gloom in San Francisco, for, a great man lay dead among false friends and exultant foes. Stretched lifeless on the shores, from whence he last saw the Golden Gates ajar, the great banker, who had been discovered, lay cold and lifeless,in his very prime. What silent agony snapped the silver cords, now loosened sorever, man will never know, but on that day,white lipped weaklings crowded in the marts of Mammon, and spoke, in bated breath, of the fallen giant,

his royal hospitality, his public spirit, his fearless defiance of obstacles, his unshaken faith in the Golden West, his cheery word for the humblest, his tender heart for all suffering. The years which have drifted the sands over his tomb by the Lone Mountain, where the rolling waves thunder his requiem on the shore, have not torn the face of the dead leader from grateful and loving hearts! Pioneer in opening nature's treasure vaults, builder of roads and factories, financier, land owner, the very head and front of enterprise, California shuddered to find the uncrowned King lying, scepterless and dead, among his foes! And meaner men, who disported once under the shade of this great cedar of Lebanon, ruled over the bank in his stead!

"This is enough. This settles it," gloomily growled Wyman, as he reviewed his plans in the struggling foggy gray morning, when the chief of the once mighty bank, an idolized John Law, lay cold in death. "It will take long years to gather up the reins which have fallen from the cold hands of Ralston," cried Wyman, throwing down the last of his mining maps and sketches. The young Napoleon of finance smiled as he thought of his securely hidden wall vault, of the now firmly held tenure of the "Mariquita," and of all the triumphs of the perilous way he had walked alone. "I am safe now. I defy the very devil himself. My tracks are covered up forever. I will give Foreman McManus his orders. I will then quietly go on to the East; but," he smiled a tiger-like prophecy, "I will have the most delightful voyage on record to Europe, if Milly Hammond is only reasonable. I will surely lose nothing here in being away for a year or so. I can easily control the future of my mine, and I will slowly reopen the workings, while I 'cultivate my musical taste' a little."

"Can I win Milly over? Can she find an excuse? Ah, yes! A little gold, a great deal of loving kindness, and her own flattered vanity. These three things would take her to the very devil, where she is surely going, where you, my vanished goddess, Vinnie, went on gaily before." And, Nature's nobleman smiled and then kissed his finger tips to the face of Vinnie Hinton still smiling down on him. "Smart girl," he murmured as he briskly rang his bell, and ordered the new foreman to be shown in. "Yes, Vinnie and her precious James are safe 'over the hills and far away.' I wonder where they will finally drift to? They are a precious pair; but, with a full purse, a new change of names, and raiment, let us hope," he piously added, "they will bring a new heart to the duties, the varied duties, devolving upon them. I would like to see them again some day," he chuckled.

At that moment when McManus, a frightened colossus, transplanted from his developing medium, the Comstock, blundered in, to gaze on the glories of "the den," for the first time, Mr. Waldo Strong, that eminent counselor, was dismissing from his private office, the night Superintendent of the local telegraph company.

"You say you owe the place you now hold to me, Harris. You can more than repay me now! I do not ask myself to see a single dispatch. You control all the messenger boys after twelve o'clock at night. I only want to trace this man's movements, by his dispatches. Where he was, for two days before the fire, where he was, on that day, and the day after, in short, his actual location for that whole week. The contents are nothing. He is a liar, and his dispatches are only cipher lies. But, I would like to know who handled them and answered him from here." The young man stood with eyes still shining in gratitude.

"To-morrow night you will have it all, Mr. Strong, only mum's the word."

"First step," muttered Strong as he caught up his papers and raced away to court. "I will get him by and by, and by God! I will hound him down to ruin."

"Where's Haley now?" sharply demanded Wyman, as he lit a cigar and sized up the new foreman, McManus, timidly standing "at attention" before him.

"Sooprintindent Hale and Norcross, sir," jerked out McManus. "They put him on the very moment he got back. Best man in the Comstock, if I do say it, sir," added the rough miner.

"That's true," coolly replied Wyman, "and, the biggest fool to leave the place he had, I would have made a man of him."

"Ah sir, his heart's broken over the dead boys," simply answered the new foreman.

"Well, let us look at matters now on this new deal," cried Wyman, drawing up to his maps. "Do you know the 'Lone Star' thoroughly?"

"Every inch, night and day for nine long years. I could put my hand in the dark, on every yard of it," fondly replied the foreman.

"Good!" briefly answered Wyman. "Sit down now, and tell me how you would go to work and connect it on the south; your own plan for reopening it, and all the future work, as well as your ideas of cost and all that. Your place depends on it. I'll keep you in the mine anyway, as you are. If you stand right with the Miners' Union, and can meet my ideas, Haley's place is yours! One condition I always make, absolute obedience, and, a shut mouth."

"I can fill the last part of the bill," resolutely answered McManus; "as for the opening of the mine, and the plan, I'll give a plain workman's idea. After that, as it's your mine, Mr. Wyman, tell me what to do, and I'll go ahead

and do it." Wyman was astonished at the clear practical views of the man, when in fifteen minutes McManus had covered the whole subject. The millionaire (no philosopher) did not reflect that a man's one subject of knowledge naturally showed him up in the best light.

"Now that's my whole idea of the underground situation," concluded the speaker. "As for the rest, you must direct above ground, for I'm a fool when I'm out of a mine."

"All right, McManus," cheerily said Wyman, "you'll do. I'll keep you down there, and save your complexion."

McManus grinned, "I'll do my best."

"You will have Haley's place, power, and salary, from date. Let me know what you want! I'll give you now a formal letter of appointment. I'll then, telegraph the bookkeeper and give you also, my letter to the Miners' Union, telling them that you will open the mine to suit them, so you'll have no trouble. Now, my man, I will introduce you to Mr. Brown, who will have my power of attorney, and Clarkson, the bookkeeper at the mine, will make all reports to him. One thing I insist on, not a human being must ever enter that mine, without my written order or Brown's, with the day, name, and date, and a specification of what part of the mine, and how long; these cards to be all turned into Clarkson. I am going away to Europe, for a couple of years." The big miner stared with open eyes. "Things will be very dull here, and I want to let the two bank gangs chew each other to pieces before I come back and speculate. Do you think I ought to come over to Virginia, as I go East?" The young man eyed the foreman keenly. McManus was very manly.

"There's a good deal of bitter feeling yet against you, personally, about the loss of life. Men all say that a safety

gallery would have saved all the lives. It's true, but, we are all wiser after the fair," said the brave Irishman, heaving a last sigh for the dead. "You can do no good; it might rouse up the men again. If Mr. Brown represents you, then Clarkson and I will run the mine to a dot, on your orders. When you come back, I may have a 'big bonanza' for you, if you will let me open the dead ground to the north. I suppose you would run over anyway if we would make a big strike?"

"What do you know of the six hundred feet on the north?" sharply queried Wyman.

"Oh, only the seeress, that's Mrs. Bowers, you know," said the simple miner, "swears that there's a heavy ore body in there, rich, and a 'stayer,' too; a great ore body; but the boys are afraid of it." McManus hesitated.

"What's the yarn? Some more of the old woman's fancies?" angrily cried Wyman.

"She says two men were killed to get it, and, she swears it is cursed—the curse of innocent men's blood, an' no good will ever come to you, of the money that's in there. 'Blood money!' she calls it." The millionaire laughed as he cried, "Bosh!" But, Wyman's teeth chattered as he filled a glass of brandy.

"McManus! don't let that old hag's croaking get the men into any foolish notions, I know the old lunatic."

"Ah, sir," solemnly said McManus, "them two men that have just jumped from a pick handle to twenty millions apiece, would sooner have the old girl's opinion, than any two wise men's on the Lode."

"Don't you mind her crazy jabber. I'll open the north end, all in good time," good-humoredly said Wyman "Now, come in to see Mr. Brown, and he will fix you all up. When you are done, let me see you again. You may

think of something that you want to say. I would like you to get back as soon as you can."

"To-night's train, sir," answered McManus, touching his forelock.

When Frederick Wyman was alone, he muttered, "I wish that old crone was in hell. Where did she pick up her notions? I hope to God she will not take a walk under ground in her dreams, and talk with the fellows down at the bottom of the shaft." And yet, he was alive, and they were all pale shades. They were harmless!

So, rosier thoughts came soon to the man who began to miss the daily sparkle of Vinnie Hinton's electric conversation. McManus went away, and at sitting down to his work, Mr. Wyman coldly examined the whole business situation. In a week, he made up his mind that the "shaking down process" had ceased. The great banker was at last laid away at rest. The echoes of his pompous funeral slowly died away, and men then turned in relief to patching up their leaky birch canoes of credit so as to sail out beyond these depths once more. Admirable American adaptability! The wholesale ruin was already a coarse standing joke. New faces shone in millionaire circles, and several robust and hot-blooded plebeian women bounded out into the arena of fashion, displaying their aspiring souls and bedizened bodies to the multitude who surged in, eager for this new opening of champagne and ladling out of terrapin. The maelstrom swung around as of yore, only, different positions marked the wreckers, the wrecking and the wrecked! In other words, to borrow the snug style of the "Stock Report," "The market has already assumed a healthy tone, based upon real values." In this survival of the luckiest, the minor chord wailing of misery, woe, penury and heart-break died away at last, and "society" began to grow

casually familiar with the names, faces and brief "excerpts" of the past history of the new czars and czarinas of moneyed California.

"I'll not stay here to have this new ruck and truck rule over me!" said, with some dignity, Mr. Frederick Wyman, whose patent of financial nobility now dated back "before the failure of the Bank of California," to the solid pyramid of wealth, builded upon a forger's skill and two bloody graves. He, for "certain reasons," decided, like Lord Bateman, "to go abroad, strange countries for to see!" These "cogent reasons" were all wrapped up, a fleecy bundle of charms, in the embodied loveliness of Miss Gladys Lyndon, who was now on her way home from the long line of country side mansions where her talent had at last timidly made its way in "on trial."

It was in obedience to a little perfumed note, that Wyman, in his most careful form, repaired to the mansion on the avenue. He was the bearer of the promised diamond ring, a sparkling pledge of amity. "It will keep till after dinner," he mused, "and, I will only give her the stock which I promised, when she has tied Gladys' hands for me with the white bow of promise." The little note sounded pleasantly. He read it over and over with a secret joy:

DEAR FRED:

Come up and dine with me alone, to-night. Gladys comes back to-day. We must arrange all before you see her. I will probably meet her to-night. You may also, if you are a good boy, and come to

Yours always,

MILLY HAMMOND.

"I have now my whole plan ready to submit to your ladyship," said Wyman, two hours later, as the delighted hostess was still examining the peerless diamond, flashing

on her finger, while she toyed with her cigarette, in the "sanctum," her own especial "place of arms." "I will be brief, as you may wish to see Gladys to-night. It is just as well to surprise her a bit. Now! I am going East, ostensibly to New York, and the South, 'to revisit my old home,'" he sneered. "I fear this fellow Strong's resentment. I wish to get our blue-eyed friend out of here, at once. My reasons are my own." Milly Hammond modestly dropped her eyes. "Now, how to remove her at once, out of Strong's reach! There's only one way. What do you say to a little trip to Europe? Take her along with you. You can impart to her that your 'physician' orders a 'change of air' and a 'sea voyage.' Ask her if she will not go on with you at once. Tell her you will make an appeal to a friend to guarantee her two year's musical instruction, in the best style, in Paris. You can stay over there for a year. That gives me, another year there. She will then be alone. You will have softened her feelings. I am the mysterious benefactor, etc., etc.; gratitude later, and all that."

"But, Fred, my house?" the lady gasped.

"Rent it furnished. I will make it all up to you," her friend calmly said.

"I've no money 'for the trip,'" the fair dame persisted, daintly turning imaginary pockets inside out. Mr. Wyman smiled and pulled out a handful of twenties.

"Presto, change!" he laughed, as he dropped them, one by one, in her lap. Their tinkle was most delightful.

"My husband!" she murmured. For the first time, Wyman frowned.

"You'll have to fix that up with him," he gloomily said, as he beat a tattoo on the window in a sudden fit of abstraction.

"All right. I can do it. I see the way," said the quick-eyed Milly.

"I thought you would find a way to surmount that obstacle," drily said Wyman, as he now drew near, very near, to her.

"When must we start?" faltered Mrs. Hammond.

"Not later than two weeks," resolutely said the capitalist, who was now eager to see the beautiful face of Gladys light up in the glow of happiness, a realized happiness, her dream come to pass, in all its bright fruition. "It will make me so happy," he murmured aloud. "A double happiness, the crowning good deed of my life."

"But, Fred, I know so few people in Paris, I will be so lonely," Milly Hammond cried, as she clung to his arm.

"Listen, you pretty fool," he amusedly said. "Do you think I am only a great 'moral engine,' puffing away, 'pro bono publico?' Haven't you some respectable friends in New York, where you can leave her, while you visit 'your family friend?'"

"Oh, certainly," and Milly began a long catalogue.

"Spare us! Good Lord," ejaculated Wyman, smiling. "That's all right, she will be safe. The 'family friends,' . . here they are." Milly Hammond's eyes sparkled with a vicious dancing light, as she clapped her hands.

"And, and?" she panted. "By accident, we meet on the steamer," he complacently murmured.

"I have suddenly business in London, and so take the same boat."

"Fred, you are a genius," the velvet-eyed siren cried.

"And when she is settled, you can travel on the continent, and in the United Kingdom, with a 'cousin.' Here he is!" The cool villain laughed, as he untwined her clinging arms from around his neck.

"And when my year is up?" she pouted, in a pretty mock sorrow.

member, half-past ten." The lips which met Gladys Lyndon's were warm with her intended lover's kisses.

"What has happened?" cried the agitated girl. "I feared that you were ill."

"Ah! Gladys, I am beside myself with happiness," laughed Milly Hammond, as she drew the graceful girl into her little gilded spider-web sanctum.

While Mr. Frederick Wyman, having caught up Varick, glared critically at the inimitable Billy Florence in his "Bardwell Slote" rendition, Mr. Waldo Strong, closeted in his lonely office, eagerly ran over a schedule of Wyman's telegraph dates, given to him by Harris. "My boy," he cried, "you have more than repaid me." The lawyer's hand went out filled with a generous sample of his few remaining golden twenties.

"Not one cent from you, now or ever," heartily cried Harris. "I must get away. They watch us night and day."

Bending over the papers, after a half hour's study, Mr. Waldo Strong made a few notes in his own private journal with the appropriate dates. "Either to pay you off for this villainy, or the triple money swindle on the banks, and to avenge Hooper's victims, for this I will break in upon your rosiest, happiest hour, you cold-hearted scoundrel," cried Strong, as he threw his head down upon his hands.

"His letters! His letters! Yes, I must watch them, too! He may be posting this fellow Hooper. I will see Inspector Stanton. Yes. I have it. If the banks will only state to him their suspicion of Wyman's complicity in this Hooper fraud, Stanton will secretly watch his mail, and also, do a bit of private tracing for me. Yes, when the cup is the very sweetest, I will dash it from your lips." Strong, now tired, careworn and wearied, snapped

the covers of his private note-book, swung his safe door, and, dreaming not of law but of love, began to roll his stone of Sisyphus up the hill again to where he first saw Gladys Lyndon's eyes shining down on him.

The pale blue stars gleamed down depreciatingly on Mr. Frederick Wyman, through a classic San Francisco fog, as he deftly dodged into the summer house on his return, at the appointed time. "I hope the gardener or the policeman will not take a stray pop at me as a burglar," Wyman exclaimed, but he was soon taken into custody by the clinging arms of a woman, who was, woman-like, already at the trysting place, for the charming daughters of Eve are always either greatly in advance, or fearfully behind, the fated hour. This strange variation in such little confidential matters, changes often, depending upon the warmth of the amatory currents, the duration of the intrigue, and the supposed relative advantages of the little fall from grace.

"Fred, it is all settled with Gladys, and she is so shaken with joy, so overcome, that I must go in to her at once."

Wyman's voice quivered with emotion as he whispered, straining his guilty ally to his breast:

"When shall I come?"

"Dinner to-morrow," she cried, "and let it be the last time till we meet in New York."

"Good," answered her new master. "You told her that I had consented?"

"Yes. You will not have any reason to complain of her lack of gratitude, she will speak for herself."

"Ah!" murmured Wyman, "there is but one thing left then. I will depart secretly in two days then, but you and I, will surely have something to say to each other, last arrangements to conclude. I am afraid of being observed by Strong, coming up here too often; come up to supper

at my rooms, nine o'clock, day after to-morrow. I will send my own carriage for you; Morani will then bring you home. I shall leave the next morning at eight o'clock, and must be over the Sierras, and out of Nevada, before any one up there knows."

"Must it be?" the fearful woman questioned, nestling in his arms. "Oh, Fred! the risk!" But, the promise was finally made, and so, once more, her light foot was fated to echo on the stairs of this Bluebeard's tower.

Two weeks later, Inspector James Stanton gazed with a deep concern in the eyes of his old friend, Waldo Strong, after a long official conference in the gloomy old post-office.

"You see, Waldo, I would gladly do anything for our friendship of twenty years; our college days are not forgotten, but, Wyman is now beyond our reach. He left here ten days ago, and is now at Louisville, Ky. So, at least, his cashier says, but, all his mail is still delivered at the office. His stay in the East is indefinite. We must await his return, we cannot get at him now."

Baffled and wearied, Waldo Strong, returning from a park drive, paused at Mrs. Hammond's residence on Van-Ness avenue. "She may perhaps know; they are old friends, and I may see Gladys Lyndon, if she has returned."

The old gardener outside smiled at Strong's futile efforts to ring up the house.

"I thought every one knew that Mrs. Hammond and Miss Lyndon had gone to New York for the summer," he stolidly said.

And thus, a darkness, deeper than the evening shades, settled down over Waldo Strong's heart. "She is lost to me now, for her upward steps will lead her far away forever."

CHAPTER X.

From Shore to Shore.

Mr. Frederick Wyman was the envied of many jealous-eyed cavaliers, when he proudly escorted Mrs. Hammond and Miss Gladys Lyndon, to the decks of the "Britannic," on the lovely August day which he had chosen for their departure. In all the bustle of this departing fashion, in this year of grace, no happier faces were turned toward the dim reaches of the ocean. An involuntary twisting of heads and craning of necks proved that the too susceptible youth of Gotham would at once crown Miss Lyndon, by a rising vote, as queen of love and beauty; and truly, a radiant delight sparkled in her splendid eyes lit up now with bright hope; for, though parted for a fortnight by Mrs. Hammond's important "family duties," Miss Lyndon had for two days, been under the renewed "personal guidance" of "dear Mrs. Hammond." Wyman breathed a sigh of relief as the "Britannic" forged slowly down the noble river.

"By Heavens! It has been a most wonderful campaign," he murmured. "Milly is, after all, one woman in a thousand. Stole away, and, Mr. Waldo Strong has lost his innings." Wyman cheerfully paced the deck, and gaily communed with himself over his first cigar. The ladies were below directing the final arrangements of their flower-decked cabins by the peerless Morani. The little Gallic valet's heart was light as he chanted at his work: "Paris! Paris! Enfin je te revois!" for, he regarded the base pursuit of lucre in the western world, while certainly

effecting magical results in his exchequer, as, after all, time lost in the bright pages of his inner life. He had more than justified the dependence of his patron.

Wyman gazed not upon the varied beauties of the splendid harbor, as the staunch liner swept along. In the happy fortnight spent in a gay revel at Long Branch with Mrs. Hammond, he had realized, to the full, the growing opulence and love of luxury of the great Eastern communities, new to him. The sea-side summer seemed to him, a tyro, to be a mingling of the old Olympian games, the Arabian Nights, and Vanity Fair. His curiosity as to the fate of the Kentucky family which he had once adorned, had been easily satisfied with two or three days at Louisville. He made no dutiful pilgrimage to the sandy "lines," where his warlike father rested by the glory memorable hills of Atlanta. With a new sense of the concrete power of money, and his mind now attuned to every luxury of the "rushing" life of the golden West, he muttered, "The South is only a land of past shadows, and of dawning future hopes." The very people there were alien to him in spirit, for, they still clung to what was valueless to this nobleman of Nature—character, always a certain self-imposed burden of the varied attributes of the "Southern gentleman."

It was only when sheltered at a great Long Branch hotel that he tasted to the full the first sweet fruits of his potent wealth. Nothing at the "West End" was too fancifully luxurious for the soft-eyed lady who gracefully peeped out at the rattling sea-side life with him as his spouse, under the convenient name of Mr. and Mrs. Armytage. Said Milly, with a merry laugh, "Fred, we will begin with the alphabet, for we may wear it all out before we return!" Busied during the day at New York, Wyman, driving along the sea-beach where the silver stars hung low over

the throbbing sea, found sin sweet, pleasure to be a naked daily life elixir, and, had not yet wearied of his dashingly and witty companion.

Morani, stationed conveniently in New York, kept a close watch upon the unsuspecting girl who must be mystified for the nonce. The occasional appearance of Mrs. Hammond served to check any suspicion of the girl unfamiliar with the babel of New York. On the night before their departure Mrs. Hammond had given to Gladys Lyndon the promised letter of credit, which Wyman, with a keen eye to business, had made available in Europe only, and for the sum of five thousand dollars a year, for two years. "This will tie her up there, under my eye," he mused.

He now looked forward to his first evening walk on the great sweeping decks with a fluttering anticipation, for Mrs. Hammond had duly laid her injunctions upon her protegée in New York not to offend Wyman's "delicacy" by personal reference to the great obligation. "Of course, dear Gladys, once at sea, you may then express your sense of his kindness to Mr. Wyman, alone! He is of a very singular and retiring nature. He has lived very much alone. His own family were all swept away in the Southern war; a sad, sad loss! He never refers to them."

Gladys Lyndon's gentle heart beat in kindly sympathy with her benefactor, as she softly said, "Ah, he has had a lonely and unhappy childhood, like my own." One strange feature in Miss Lyndon's unsounded character had singularly impressed Wyman, and his woman fellow-conspirator. Even in the hours of their jolly masquerade at Long Branch, Wyman had found time to urge upon Mrs. Hammond his wish to gradually find out all the hidden heart-history of the talented novice.

"Fred, I will do all I can," she most heartily pledged

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the throbbing sea, found sin sweet, pleasure to be a new daily life elixir, and, had not yet wearied of his dashing and witty companion.

Morani, stationed conveniently in New York, kept a close watch upon the unsuspecting girl who must be mystified for the nonce. The occasional appearance of Mrs. Hammond served to check any suspicion of the girl unfamiliar with the babel of New York. On the night before their departure Mrs. Hammond had given to Gladys Lyndon the promised letter of credit, which Wyman, with a keen eye to business, had made available in Europe only, and for the sum of five thousand dollars a year, for two years. "This will tie her up there, under my eye," he mused.

He now looked forward to his first evening walk on the great sweeping decks with a fluttering anticipation, for Mrs. Hammond had duly laid her injunctions upon her protegée in New York not to offend Wyman's "delicacy" by personal reference to the great obligation. "Of course, dear Gladys, once at sea, you may then express your sense of his kindness to Mr. Wyman, alone! He is of a very singular and retiring nature. He has lived very much alone. His own family were all swept away in the Southern war; a sad, sad loss! He never refers to them."

Gladys Lyndon's gentle heart beat in kindly sympathy with her benefactor, as she softly said, "Ah, he has had a lonely and unhappy childhood, like my own." One strange feature in Miss Lyndon's unsounded character had singularly impressed Wyman, and his woman fellow-conspirator. Even in the hours of their jolly masquerade at Long Branch, Wyman had found time to urge upon Mrs. Hammond his wish to gradually find out all the hidden heart-history of the talented novice.

"Fred, I will do all I can," she most heartily pledged

him. "The truth is, Gladys is a strangely unmanageable girl in some things. I have not yet won her entire confidence. I have again and again delicately probed her upon the very points you refer to. With no trace of irritation she has only frankly and simply said, 'I have never had a childhood, save in the convent of the term. The little I do know, is only a fragmentary record of my private sorrows. My very name, Gladys Lyndon, even, is a legacy of an humble friend, who was all in all to me, before your goodness came to brighten my life.'

"So, Fred, I did go out and tamper a bit with the Sisters; smooth-browed and sly they are, for, I threw away my time at the Visitation Convent, for a prolonged chat with an oyster would be just as productive of news. I do not know what the seal is on these passionless lips, but, nuns are not flesh-and-blood women as we others are."

Mr. Wyman, on the general principle of a "wholesome variety," slyly congratulated himself that there were many other women in the world than the Milly Hammond type. The lurking traitor already did full justice to the unstained womanhood of the fair-browed, clear-eyed singer. He had not yet seen any flaw in her bright armor. "I must be very careful with her, and warn Milly, too;" for the "roses and ruptures," had led on Mrs. Hammond into a decidedly dashing "lionne" style, which might, by one single unfortunate danger signal settle all his nefarious hopes, his now madly-increased longings. "You now play your part, and leave her to me. Have her for my own, I will,' he finally said. "I don't care a bit for her past. What it has been is self-evident. It is her future years, which I demand, and I will yet, lead her up to see life as it is." Mrs. Hammond winced under Wyman's thrust, and was wisely silent, for, even careful as she was, the record of her own life was written on her face. She

could not understand the watchful reserve which locked up in the proud girl's innocent bosom, a world of womanly ambitions, so far-soaring that she only whispered them to her pillow.

And that first night, on the great waste of green waters, the orphaned beauty was thankful in her murmured prayers for the delicate generosity of the princely miner. Her startled heart beat quickly for a few frightened gasps, when she learned of Wyman's purpose to sail on the same steamer. It was the first note of alarm. "A little financial business in London, and he may then, run over to Paris and see us there, before he goes home again. Such a man's time is not his own; alas!" sighed Milly Hammond, in a dark premonition of parting, "his varied duties make him a factor in many lives." It was truly Wyman's cheerful purpose to fulfill the latter statement, in every sense.

He found time, however, to whisper to Milly Hammond as she came on deck with the glowing Gladys to see the last glimpse of Fire Island, "We must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, Milly. Now, as I came up the steamer gang plank, one of our Long Branch friends slapped me on the back. 'Hello, Armytage, going over?' I was so startled that I could only bow in silence. 'And Mrs. Armytage, does she, too, go with you?' I managed to make sure that he was not a passenger, and then, declined his eager offer of several introductions to fellow passengers. My heart was frozen in fear of a scene. So, you see, the sword hangs over us by a single hair."

He realized in saucy Milly Hammond's half amused "moue" of pretty dismay, that she would simply "trust to luck" to appease her by no means exacting lord who was ever flitting between Alaska and the City of Mexico, on some shadowy "business," presumably "mines." It was in

fact, a jolly proverb among the "initiated" that Hammond only touched foot occasionally, for a brief rest at the rock of his family altar, and then soared away again, out into the unknown. Whether it may have been the result of accident or design, this great mystery long remained "one of these things that no fellow can find out." It had, of course, its due explanation, the riddle was capable of solution, but, even the fashionable circles which the velvet-eyed lady adorned so gracefully, could not quite "make it out." It was a charming example of how attenuated the marriage bond could be drawn, out in the far West, and yet hold two hearts legally together. Probably, it was also a result of that "glorious climate," which figures so often as a "piéce de résistance" in the tourist's guides, and other rose-colored local literature of California.

Wyman grimly realized that the embarrassment of detection would be his alone, that the loss of Gladys Lyndon, would be the certain penalty he would pay in the event of discovery. He left the ladies to make a charming sunset group, as he wandered quietly away, to think his passion-sketched programme over, alone. He had already observed the great ship's company and noted the varied social characteristics of this summer pilgrim band, a typical American outre-mer delegation. Many of the types he well knew already, and yet, others were revelations. The bustling Hebrew partners "going over to buy the goods;" the prosperous returning foreigners, who had found a fortune in free America; the blasé tourist; a few consequential office-holders, and, a horde of business men on special missions. All these, were forms he well knew. But, for the first time, he saw the crystallized knots of first-class eastern American pleasure seekers; a few earnest-eyed teachers; various passive-looking students; a few pale-browed men, going over on a settled plan of travel,

"limited to the expenditure of one hundred and thirty-six dollars and seventy-five cents, in ninety days;" several representative cranks, freaks, and also, a good many sharpers and gamblers. All these things amused him. The line of the social caste began with the buxom unattached married women, with or without their daughters of varied national car-marks, all going abroad alone. Their distant husbands were safely cut off now, by a fifty-mile chasm of roughening water. Whether persuaded or outwitted, it was too late to "call back" these heterogeneous woman pilgrims to their hearths and homes, or even to the lonely "flat," which "might" or "might not" mourn the vanished footsteps! These cheerful ladies varied from those of "a sternly serious purpose," indicated by their "home made hoods and waterproofs," up to the dashing dames whose furtively sparkling eyes and evident generous money provision, shone out their set purpose "to have a good time," while they were abroad.

"All this, I suppose, makes up the great national American character," sneered Wyman. "I suppose that staid Europeans must think America is composed of shoddy palaces, with workshops in the basements, dime museum attachments, and 'song and dance' extras, thrown in." And, for the first time, it dawned upon him that five hundred traveling Americans, of any social or moneyed grade, are a most queerly assorted lot. Wyman had not yet dabbled in Herbert Spencer. "Heredity, environment, and heterogenity" were so far, unmeaning shibboleths to him, so he merely murmured, "Well, they are a queer old lot, and they do not seem to belong together by any earthly rule, save that of the first cabin ticket."

The thronging daughters, with bright expectant eyes, filled all the different grades, from the "underdone and

overdressed" to the supremely indifferent "society" rose-bud. A hovering nimbus of men glared furtively at the wondrous feminine goods the Gods had provided. Certain family groups were being quickly rallied as if to verify "the tally of the tribes." These were well defined nuclei of various hostile factions, whose horns, now "mightily exalted," would soon be locked in the deadly struggle for "precedence," and the small triumphs of the Captain's table. They classed up from the overjoyed "newly promoted" on their first trip, usually surrounded with hordes of partly developed progeny of the most baleful activity, and the frankly buoyant successful speculators, to the mighty mining magnate, a scowling bank president; the last, with "I won't," written in every line of his puffy, bagged eyelids. Faded aristocracy, fragile health, the chaise lounge, the yard-stick eyeglass, with the attendant bran-new "maid," and the too evident "valet d'occasion,"—dated these lords and ladies back to the days of gas-pipe muskets, paper shoes and tin swords, provided at the fattest contract rates, for the suppression of the rebellion. Discordant Daisy Millers of diverse types, jostled each other on the slippery cabin stairs, with their dreamy, voluptuous young eyes hungry for the first sight of those slim-waisted military dandies of Europe, who go so far for the first sandwich, a glass of wine and the pioneer smile.

"Wait till I get her home, at Schloss Pumpernickle," glowers the Baron Ernest Von Pumpernickle of the Second Hanoverian Chasseurs. "She shall to sing then, of a different song." Two of these bright-eyed young falcons, with entangled wings, exchanged mutual glances of hatred á la Sioux and Pawnee. "Shoddy," exclaimed the pretty assailant. "Ah! No, oil!" replied her victim, neatly rising to the occasion. There was an evident desire here to "draw the line," a perpetual operation, daily repeated,

whenever traveling Americans meet, which proved to Wyman that there was "one glory of the moon, and another of the stars," among these restless samples of resultant American social life. 'Fin de siécle' had not yet swept in with its "baby stare," ignoring the useful past, and only glaring onward and outward, into the glittering summer sea of the newer "American aristocracy."

Already, the great break for vantage points in the smoking room had occurred, but, rising pyramidal above all the meaner throng, Wyman noted General Hiram Buford and family, of California. These autocrats long had hovered upon one of the pinnacles of "Nob Hill," where the getting up process, had been successfully achieved in days of yore. The staying up, was to be a triumph of time! It was there, on Nob Hill alone, that the invisible line was drawn, which so far, had excluded Frederick Wyman, Esq., from the loftiest revels of San Francisco. There were but two remaining feats yet to achieve, in order to finish his labors of Hercules. The first was to obtain the entree to that Californian Royal Table Round, the next, to lead a german there, in triumph, with one of the fairest flowers of San Francisco loveliness, etc., etc. This now mysterious cotillion was to be an affair of secret and furtive future study. The cast-iron lions, zinc tigers, and plaster statues of "Nob Hill," had so far, fiercely barred his upward path, as he grasped that banner with the strange device, "Lone Star." He had truly reached a lofty financial height, but never yet, had dared to deem that he could safely enter the doors of these unseasoned redwood palaces, "on the level."

"Milly! There are the Bufords," he whispered eagerly, as Mrs. Hammond and the dainty Gladys moved along the deck, at his side.

The errant wife, who had herself, once upon a time, trifled away a few forgotten hours with General Hiram

Buford, most keenly inspected Mrs. Pauline Buford's semi-reception toilet, in which she was most royally arrayed for promenade, dinner and the mal-de-mer. Her diamonds were all there, as usual, distinctly visible to the naked eye. In deference, however, to Father Neptune's hoary beard, Mrs. Buford had not worn a decôlleté costume. That was reserved, "the most unkindest cut of all," for the august eyes of the Empress of India.

Neither General Hiram Buford, of a most rugged health, (gracefully described by a San Francisco paper of opposite politics, as "an overgrown loafer,"), nor his sturdy wife, justly famed once for her activity in the practical department of a small country hotel, had given aught but royal descent and the possibility of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, to their petted and anæmic daughter, Minnie.

This young lady, whose attitude indicated an entire absence of spinal column, languidly stared at that young blooming Diana, Miss Gladys Lyndon.

"Rather a pretty girl," moped out Miss Minnie.

Mrs. Pauline Buford returned Milly Hammond's stare, with a rooted aversion, and compound interest. They were secretly, set enemies. The one sorrowed, envying the solid substratum of Buford's shekels; the other, with a dull, burning hatred, stood glowering there, recognizing those meretricious charms of mere physical beauty, which, with her outwardly better selected adornments of dress, carried the Hammond far beyond her haughty sister of fashion. As regarded "style" and "go," Mrs. Pauline Buford was outclassed, nay, distanced. She therefore, handicapped Mrs. Hammond with a cold cut.

"Do you know those two women, Pauline?" roughly demanded General Buford.

"Yes, Hiram; one is that Hammond woman, you know"—the General winced and reddened as he looked at

a passing coal schooner with a sudden interest—"the other, is the sweet, pretty singer girl who made such a sensation at the Athelings' down at Menlo. I suppose she is going to Europe to study."

General Buford was now weighing a mighty matter in his mind. He had so far, allowed Frederick Wyman to pass on with a half nod of recognition, but the young man was now really a rising financial star. He twinkled in a fixed glory, a veritable "Lone Star." Buford, who admired success in every form, had a vague idea that Wyman had "scalped his enemies" to the very frontal bone, "in the last great deal." Buford always idolized "smartness" in all its phases, from a cheap horse trade, up to a bold bluff at "poker."

"Pauline," he said, sotto voce, as the trio reached the far limit of their walk, "this young fellow is a new power in western money circles. He is now worth a cool million. Wyman is also a bachelor. He can't be traveling with these people. Suppose that I ask the purser to put him at our table?"

"What do you say, Minnie?" whispered Mrs. Pauline, who secretly feared the "washed-out" looking daughter, "who had been through a seminary." This fact was impressed very frequently on the mother by the shrewish and spoiled one child of their later grandeur. Miss Minnie Buford secretly surveyed Frederick Wyman, whose outer man was a tribute to the sartorial reforms of "Mr. Bell of New York." Wyman's get up was entirely on Bell's classic lines. "No visible effort; general effect; that is my motto, sir," Mr. Bell had grandly said, as Wyman had left his hands simply perfect. It strangly happened that the rugged health, glowing eyes, and robust outlines of Wyman pleased the thirsty-looking maiden

"He's not so bad looking, if he's not too rough; you

can introduce him, papa," decreed the young virgin, whose general effect was that of a human glass of absinthe.

Hence and therefore, pride beamed in the glowing eyes of the sole owner of the "Lone Star," when General Buford boomed into the smoking-room and grandly accosted him. "Mr. Wyman," said he, "we are members of the same club. I would be most happy to present you to my wife and daughter. You and I, don't see much of each other at home. Our lives lie in different places; so, I've asked the purser to put you at our table." A general lifting of heads, and the rise of Wyman's social stock to fifty per cent. above par, followed this imposing announcement, as the young man proceeded to "open a bottle."

One bright hope blossomed here, destined to shine illusive. A couple of card sharpers promptly marked Mr. Frederick Wyman down as rich, young, and innocent, and, the protegé of the great capitalist. It was only after several nights of stout battling, that the two dismayed sons of Mercury "gave it up, as a bad job." They had skillfully drawn Wyman into a "four-handed" game. He "stood out," when the "painted ladies" turned away their pretty faces, but, he "smote those Egyptians," hip and thigh, whenever the cards ran his way. It was a simple transfer of coin from the other man they were successfully fleecing, to the lucky Wyman.

"Where did you ever learn this game?" dejectedly asked one of the professionals at last.

"In off nights, during the long winter months on the Comstock," modestly said Wyman, who had now "gathered in" about all he intended to allow Milly Hammond.

"I owe you an humble apology, sir," said the frank professional plunger; "I took you for a 'sucker!'" Mr. Wyman was still wearing the triumphant smile which had adorned him since he sat by the side of Miss Minnie

Buford, the unapproachable. She was always surrounded with a chevaux-de-frise of acid sharpness, a morally depraved bundle of physical reticence, misnamed innocence.

It had been singularly fortunate for Fred Wyman, cool-headed in his gloomy game of the future, that he did not wish to identify the young diva with his name. The "personal attendance" of the happy Milly Hammond, who frolicked secretly in her delightful double life, enabled her to mark the chart of sweet Gladys Lyndon's social life. "All at sea" were the travelers, as the good "Britannic" sped on. Buford had at last gained a vague idea that his daughter might find a very fair husband in Wyman. The self-made "general" had the same æsthetic ideas in marrying off daughters as in yoking calves, though his blundering indulgence of his disagreeable child's whims was carried to the extreme of folly. He rather liked Wyman in the rapidly growing traveling acquaintance. Their lives were really different. The General's special line was stealing ranches, and grabbing all exposed properties, where need or ignorance gave him play for his peculiar talents. Wyman confined himself only to robbery, pure and simple, with the little background of second-hand "murder," as a lurid scenario.

In their "heart of hearts," they were both the same. General Buford allowed his wife a fair pull at the family "pagoda tree" undisturbed, while she prudently allowed him "carte blanche" in his drinking, poker playing and what he was pleased to term "his private life!" While not exactly of the wildest "Bonanza days" school, General Hiram Buford, to use his own comprehensive term, "had made his life a pretty fair picnic." So, the new friends were both "shining ones" in the "staccato" style of modern Californian elegance. If they had not "the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere," they had

both very definite ideas as to "waking up" London and Paris.

"Wyman, my boy," said the General, upon the final cementing of their friendship, "you and I, must go around a little in London and Paris together. By the way, your friend Mrs. Hammond over there, ought to remember me. She is a mighty fine woman." It was tacitly agreed, through the delicate intercession of Wyman, that General Hiram Buford and Mrs. Hammond "knew each other," when the rosy and watchful Mrs. Buford was below. This fortunate juncture aided Wyman in the long and earnest daily conferences with Gladys Lyndon, when, under the stars, "lost in the night and the light of the sea," the girl poured out her hopeful imaginings to the man her grateful heart had ennobled. A hero of nature's making!

For, she had spoken to him words which were of promise, when, out on the lonely sea, she felt herself freed from the sound of all earthly jars, of all the fret and bustle of a great unfamiliar city. It had been easy for Gladys Lyndon to free her happy heart to Mrs. Hammond. To do that easy-going western dazzler justice, she was really constitutionally good-hearted. She did not like to see any empty glass near, when the wine of life was to be had for the asking. It had been so many years that she had softly glided down the stream of her gay life, padding her ears against the voice of Conscience with jeweled fingers, that she realized no special treachery in her behavior toward Gladys Lyndon. It seemed as if she were only a new female Talleyrand, arranging the easy turning of a sharp social corner. In fact, she regarded the judicious and confidential use of womanly charms, as only the availing of a certain natural capital, most fortunately always at the secret disposal of struggling womanhood.

In her own inmost soul, she debated not the propriety of

the marketing of beauty, either in the bud, blossom, or full flower. She had no inmost soul, and her only daily care was the tasteful decoration of her external body. Introspection was not her strong forte, but, in circumspection, she was a very Vidocq. A perfectly balanced temperament, she abhorred scenes and all strong emotions, as productive of wrinkles, which, on brow or dress, were her especial earthly tormentors. Whenever she had felt the rosy charms of love tighten, to avoid an undue strain, she had either slipped them, cut them, or gently loosened them. "Never struggle for Empire," she had confided to a practical young occidental femme galante. "Whenever you reach that phase, let the man at once go. He is gone already!"

As marvelously adaptable as most middle class American women are, she steered her frail bark safely past the rocks of Scandal, for, the gordian-knot of the long tow rope of her husband kept her in the thread of the open channel. He was not much of a husband, still, he was a visible entity, and had "a local habitation and name," both of which she availed herself of, and she "pointed with pride" to the fact that she had very few enemies among the fair sex, and kept her name out of the newspapers. In this well-chosen course, she moved safely along, always selecting her favorites from those who had more to lose by a public clamor than herself. A wise Griselda!

The frank kindness with which she had won Gladys Lyndon's heart, was supplemented with a really delicate consideration, in not forcing herself upon the girl's soul-confidence; and so, the orphan had easily unburdened her heart to the sympathetic schemer.

It was far different when Gladys spoke out with faltering accents to Wyman. They were alone on the deck, and the girl's failing voice and broken accents told him of delicate feelings new to him.

"You shall never repent your kindness! I will show to you how I can return your noble generosity! There is a great world on whose threshold I stand. It is lit up with the rays of art. It throbs with the sweetness of song. When I have earned a place in the hearts of the great generous public, if I am not beaten in this race of life, I can return your present help, but my grateful heart will always hold you sacred, as a brother, as one who has lifted me out of darkness." "Don't speak of it, Miss Lyndon, I am confident of your future success, but, you are agitated. Let me conduct you below. Some other time, we can talk of all this; when you are settled in Paris; when you have had the opinions of the great experts upon your voice." And, he was really honest, at the moment, for the girl, clinging to his arm, was now looking up at him with softly shining eyes, and it smote his heart that she trusted him so implicitly, so fearlessly. She would have been fairer game if she were rusée, and had touched the cup of Life.

Wyman learned to interpret that strange feeling later when he strayed alone into great silent cathedrals, where his foot waked the echoes of God's hallowed temples. The half-fledged borderer, silent in awe, paused there frightened at the audible proof of his own presence on the threshold. "I have no business to be here," he humbly and involuntarily, admitted; and so, on this first night of the proud girl's shy avowal, he felt that he stood upon the threshold of a new womanhood, one too fair, too pure, too holy to be profaned by his presence. And yet, the fatal glamor of her beauty, the thrill of her witching voice, the magnetic thrall which, unknown to herself, she cast over him, the banked fires of his passion, all these held him on the course which marked her as his future prey. But awed by her virginal trust in his manhood and honor, startled at her blind belief in his being the man he

claimed to be, he muttered as he walked the deck alone. "By God! she is truly a human icicle. If I ever hear that girl say, 'I love you,' I will have to marry her," and his feet, unfamiliar with the paths of rectitude, and the mazes of high life, stumbled often as he went on his way, borne over the rude Atlantic billows.

He had long been subjected to rough half-confidences of the doughty western financial "general." "Wyman, my dear boy," Buford had boomed out, "I know that you have some money scheme in London and Paris. You are not merely here for a good time. You are much too young to retire! I don't care how much money you have got. Now, I am a bit lonely, you see," he became confidential over his fourth brandy and soda. "To be nailed always to my wife and daughter, is a little, just a little, too wearing. They both want to rush off to Paris, millinery and all that; but, I have some important private affairs in London. Come over there with me. Go out into society a bit. Look around a little. I'll make you all solid with the American minister. He's going to present my people at Court, by and by. I can give you a clear footing in business and moneyed circles. Then, when we are done, you and I can slip off, and have a little racket together, on the continent."

The new candidate for Nob Hill favor, thought instantly of the "very present help," in his schemes for marketing a portion of the "Lone Star." He was conscious of the future advantages of an entry of his own name, in the "Libro d'oro" of San Francisco. "I might do worse than marry that Buford girl!" he thought.

It seemed that the house of Buford was "securely planted" on the great hill, where a budding Californian autocracy now wore divided crowns, and, it showed no present symptoms of "sliding down." "I think I'll see if

loneliness and a little hard work, will not warm up my Snow Queen. It may bring her to reason;" so he thought and hence, promptly answered: "General, I will thankfully accept your kind offer." He mused, "I can leave Milly Hammond to knock about Paris alone a bit, and Morani can have her little secret game easily watched for me."

The rapprochement of the two rich men did not include Mrs. Hammond and Gladys Lyndon. The matron was airing her most charming graces, and Miss Lyndon's voice had already betrayed itself. Thus, while the steamer passed on, in smooth seas, under mellow summer skies, there were those of the passengers who lingered in delight to watch the rapt face of the happy girl at the piano in the ladies "Social hall."

Seated in a quiet corner, Mr. John Wayne Otis, whose card bore the words "Tremont Club, Boston," while veiling his growing interest, keenly studied the peculiar tie binding the beautiful Miss Lyndon to Wyman, whom he instinctively extremely disliked. Otis, "Jack" or "Wayne," to his friends, was now returning to the continent, to finish certain delayed researches in Paris, which had busied him since he had left Harvard a dozen years before, with the still illusive purpose of finishing his great work upon "Modern Architecture." An easy future, a large acquaintance, an all round aptitude at athletics, hunting and yachting, and a varying purpose, enabled Mr. Jack Otis to drift easily along in life, taking current notes of men and things, in a delightfully lotos-like way. He had long ago, finished all his globe trotting, and the great "purpose of his life" had so far returned to him, that he was now casting out a sheet-anchor for a considerable stay in Paris. Jack had achieved a "very good time" in New York and Boston, during the past winter, and was, therefore, now

hoping that a sudden plenitude of ideas would graft him on the French stock, long enough for the American blossoms of his vicarious studies to bear golden fruit.

He had been startled, on the night of the girl's first earnest avowal of gratitude to Wyman, to be the involuntary spectator of her clinging to Wyman's arm in an appealing manner, and her evident agitation as the nouveau riche led the excited orphan girl to the companionway.

"Well, I'll be hanged if I can make it out!" cried Otis, the next evening, as he tossed his half smoked cigar over into the boiling wake of the liner, and then sullenly "turned in." Old Orion "sloping slowly to the west," told him none of the secrets of the long evening walks of Wyman and Gladys Lyndon. "If this is any 'Romance of the Nineteenth Century,' I'll jump overboard," growled the Bostonian. "This is a noble woman, if there is any seal of nature which can not be counterfeited. It is, however, a strange trio. The handsome, giddy dame, a Queen of Diamonds; this blue-eyed beauty with brows of light, a queen of Hearts, to be; the Westerner, a lucky Jack of Spades, and queerly shuffled into this pack of Life's cards. They are diverse in every way. They should soon naturally drift apart, and yet, there is evidently some hidden purpose; and this young 'Bonanza star,' he seems to be himself in some way, attached to that 'wild ass of the wilderness,' General Hiram Buford. He is devotedly nursed, too, by the reigning Queen of the House of Buford, and, moreover, is not inimical to the Princess Buford, she of the green eyes, and molasses-candy colored hair. And these and those, are divided "by the dark tide of royal blood," which cuts off the Golden Ass and his brood, from all people of slimmer exchequer."

Jack Otis had early "pasted in his hat" the adage, "Mind your own business," and yet, his soul was drawn

to Gladys Lyndon by the matchless witchery of her voice, by the proud reserve of her manner, by the nameless charm which lingered around her stately presence. In vain he sought for a fitting key to the enigma, and the discovery of several furtive tête-à-têtes between General Buford and the vivacious Mrs. Hammond, at night, near the jungles of the "torrid zone" of the smoke stacks, only increased his wonder. "Ah! the General makes incursions into Wyman's unguarded lines, while the young capitalist worms himself into the bosom of his family." It was a strange tangle, and Otis, who had himself spent a winter "on trial" in San Francisco, and had experienced that peculiar environment, known as a "hearty Californian welcome," blushed to own that he was forced to ascribe this singular state of affairs again to "the climate," that poor oft-burdened scapegoat, which meekly suffereth much aspersion by the Golden Gate.

The accidental fall of a book enabled Mr. Otis to win a smile, and a low-murmured "Thank you," from Miss Lyndon, a few days after leaving New York. The preparation for a mid-ocean concert, in which Mr. Jack Otis was "de rigueur," the Master of Ceremonies, brought him also formally into the circle of Gladys Lyndon's "steamer acquaintance." Youth, time, and opportunity did the rest. The little companion volume, Thomas à Kempis, the girl's sweet, serious, stately womanhood, the sympathetic reaching out of her troubled heart, to meet his own soul, yearning toward her, made the middle and closing days of this voyage memorable in the life of the man who was destined by Fate never to complete that monument of midnight toil, the magnum opus, "Modern Architecture." Its completed title and some fragmentary chapter headings will be handed down for many generations in the Otis family, as a visible proof of how near Uncle Jack came to

being known over the whole thinking world, as an original genius and a mind of the first order! The necessity of frequent rehearsals of the musical program, the rapid growth of the mystic fibers knitting these two drifting souls together, the long conferences over art and music, the placing of a really solid Parisian experience at the disposal of Miss Lyndon, and much star-gazing, brought them very near in heart, searching the horizon while around them, "all unheeded, the waste of waters drifted by," had its charms, and, it also developed Mr. John Wayne Otis into a first-class builder of "Castles in Spain." He had learned all the simple story of her future hopes, and had divided the thrill of her noble womanly ambition. Side by side on the swelling tide, they glided along unwittingly into the delicious confidential intimacy of nature's own selection. And, the shy girl, now unfolding, in the quiet of this congenial heart companion, leaf after leaf of her nature, glowed as a conqueror through her timid heaving bosom, showing out the rosy life and love gleaming there within in the alabaster lamp of her pure heart. It seemed so strange, it seemed as if the viewless spirits of the air had breathed some awakening upon these two stranger hearts, for, they were all alone out on the sea, and the cultured mind of the young Harvard man found its supplement in the delicate, dreamy enthusiasm of the pure-hearted girl. There was neither haste nor hurry. There was no kindling of a passion-fanned glow. The current of their lives flowed together in the mingled tide of a common sympathy and aspiration, for, they were in the very morning time of life, and only to be near each other seemed to be the dearest boon of the friendly stars which found them so often now lingering on deck in late converse.

It was not strange that the confident Wyman noted not

the growing intimacy of the man and maid, for his own appetite for pronounced "high life," of the pictorial order, grew daily, and in a certain general loose way, that pompous financial Boanerges, Hiram Buford, devoted much of his valuable time to past reminiscences and keen future plot-weaving with the keen, fresh-brained young speculator.

Happy Milly Hammond was also constrained, by mere prudence, to allow Frederick Wyman, Esq., a free field in the presence of her redoubtable secret enemy, Mrs. Buford, whom she feared, and she also nourished a budding revenge in planting a little crop of fern seed, to surround with an invisible charm, a brilliant future campaign in San Francisco. It was fenced in with a hedge to be forever impregnable to the argus-eyed Mrs. Buford.

"The fact is, General," the fair Hammond whispered, as she leaned heavily on the arm of this "Strong man in Israel," "you need a daily congenial companionship. A man of your prominence," and here, the General swelled visibly, "should have a little eyrie of his own where he can have the company of a friendly soul, unknown to all the cold schemers of every-day life."

Milly Hammond had located that same "eyrie" in her own cosy house on her return, and the "bald-headed eagle" who now blinked under her honey words, was both hopeful and complaisant. "I have long thought of such an idea. It fills a long felt want! Wait, only wait, till we are home again, in San Francisco," the thick-voiced old Romeo whispered, and so, the star of hope shone very brightly out for him over the future years to be, for, in her unprejudiced mind, Milly Hammond had decided that some strong wave of fortune might sweep her off her present safe perch, far away from Wyman, whose vanity and egoistic conceit she had recognized with judicial calmness, the light of long experience in varying manhood.

"He is young and also 'dead gone' on himself. Young men are also so much harder to handle than men of a certain age, sensible men, like the General," and Mrs. Milly Hammond thus closed her eyes on this night of most pleasant prognostications with a dreamy far-away look, which boded no good for the future peace of that highly illustrated fashion plate, Mrs. General Hiram Buford, for she had sworn to get even."

Mr. Jack Otis bore a furrowed brow, as the steamer gradually neared the Old World. He now walked the swaying decks, often alone, when sheer prudence kept him from the side of Gladys Lyndon, with the instinctive jealousy of a lover. He also avoided Mr. Frederick Wyman, but his care was altogether unnecessary.

The daily additions to a higher pedestal whereon to worship himself, was Wyman's continual work. He was now the "observed of all observers," and a mantle of the newest dignity settled upon his shoulders, for the companionship of Hiram Buford had made him a steamer notable. He already saw his triumphal sweep up Nob Hill as a conqueror, in his own carriage. A fair-faced wife gazing out from the palace windows, with waiting smiles for her returning lord. This would have splendidly completed the picture of this Virginia City Claude Melnotte. And yet, it liked my lord not, to fancy the "spirit of human absinthe" hovering over him in the guise of that alert and passionate-hearted, spoiled child of fortune, "Minnie Buford. "God knows, she is bright enough," Wyman muttered. "But, she has only a steel wedge in place of a heart. Now, if Gladys—!" And, though the feet of Minnie were "beautiful upon the mountains" of the sacred western aristocracy, there was a burning drift of passion's boiling tide which carried him back to the side of Gladys, the friendlesss child of genius.

"Milly, this 'young Yankee prince' seems growing very devoted to Gladys," at last, remarked Wyman; for Jack Otis seemed to him to be a lofty specimen pattern of Boston coldness, and, by common consent, he was the "Prince Charming," of the voyage. "I don't see what there is in that chap. He's a sort of draughtsman, or 'rising contractor,' is he not?"

"Ah! Fred, let him alone. He has taken a good deal of friendly interest in Gladys' musical plans. He is a swell in his way, and, there's a good deal, too, in a Yankee swell, of his class," mused Mrs. Hammond." "He is unexceptionable, and, he knows his Paris. Now, the very delicacy of Gladys' position toward you, makes her very anxious that gossip should not connect your two names. He will soon drift away when we are all settled in Paris."

Mr. Jack Otis, contemplating a tired sea bird perched on the yard arm, whistled, "There's a sweet little cherub who sits up aloft," and he secretly resolved not to drift very far away from the woman whom he was learning to love. He thought of her queening it in a certain old home near Cambridge, when he was lord and master of its fringing shade trees and fragrant lawn, where King George's officers had taken their dish of tea in stately form, long before the baby stars gleamed on the world's brightest flag!

"Gladys, with her exquisite face, and her wild voice pealing out to the sunny sky," he murmured. The possible picture was a thrill to every nerve. "But, my mother," he paused and ominously gazed at a black storm cloud driving down upon them, "What would she say?" He thought, with a sudden start, that he was the last of his line. His stately mother had held up her head with Roman pride when her eldest son was brought home from his country's war, his sword lying on the flag covering his

gallant breast, cold forever in death. He had fallen a bright sacrifice in the awful conflict

> "That was waged with fiendish mania,
> On the field of Spottsylvania."

She had guarded the proud silence of the grief of a mother of heroes, and yet, Jack Otis knew she would sooner see him, too, laid away in the grave than to have him break the "even current" of the honor of the old family by a mesalliance. "What do I really know of this girl?" a gnawing fiend of prudence whispered. "Her obscure youth, her silence as to her family name, the close cramping wall of a convent education, confining her splendid mind, her western point of social departure (my mother's especial aversion), and, the company I find her in!"

Jack Otis recognized that flaring light, Mrs. Milly Hammond, as a star member of the "Executive Committee of the Us Girls' Society." He trusted not to the sleek and decorous exterior of this tiger in ribbony chains, for, in sooth, "playing propriety," was galling to Milly, and, she now promised herself secretly a "horrible revenge" in an "out and out" Parisian frolic with Fred, and also a little "exploring tour" with the buoyant Hiram Buford, "on the strict Q. T." The General felt himself quite a Lothario in moving on this little sly game along, under the very eyes of the partner of his bosom. Mrs. Hammond was "evening up," daily for the cold cuts of the wife.

"But, there is nothing in common between them," decided Jack. He only saw beneath the silken armor of Milly a very fallible nature. He murmured as he gazed on her gyrations around the deck, in the words of his old Professor, the beloved Holmes:

> "We've seen a deal of life, my boy, its varnish and veneer,
> Its stucco fronts of character flake off and disappear!"

"Oliver Wendell Holmes was right," gaily cried Jack, his heart lightening. "It is only her character which is all 'stucco,' for, her figure and complexion are nature's prodigal gifts. This much of Mrs. Hammond, is real." It was even so, and the fair delegate from California thanked God for it, too, nightly, as she stood before the diminutive glass in her lonely cabin.

"But, there's no stucco in Gladys. She is real and all that I would have her," he stoutly murmured, and yet, he knew there was still the silent citadel of her heart to be stormed. Her unawakened nature might glow in a rose light under some other man's touch than his own. "She cannot design a present marriage with that Jack of Spades, now in training for the entry as 'Golden Ass, No. 2!' No! He will probably marry Miss Minnie, and become a member of that great 'moral show' of agglomerated eminence, known in Californian lingo as 'the Buford outfit.' I wonder if he is a relative of this bright-eyed kestrel, Madame Hammond, the free companion." Horrible memories of vanished men he had known, who had "gone wrong," at the altar, now haunted him.

Alas! Of all the boys whose "faith had blinded their eyes," not one, had "lived happily ever afterwards." On the contrary, the men of his own grade who had married "interesting orphans," "wandering Russian princesses," "rising artists," "stray Italian Contesses," watering place "Marquises," or "Hungarian nobledames," with dark flashing eyes, and a "pathetic smile," had been afterwards seen, in search of either the most available divorce courts, or else, sought shops where cheap revolvers were within the reach of the most modest purse. A few, had sullenly drank themselves to death. In theory, Jack Otis contemned all romance. He was a most practical landlord, also, and very acute in casting up his own bank account. He had

grimly smiled at all these uncanny social happenings of the past. He had sighed

"They go! The festive cusses go!"

as these men, "shot madly from their spheres," and, had often laughed, "No, sir! No King Cophetua part in the play of Life for me." The shrewd remark of his old Scotch nurse haunted him: "Marry a cat of your ain kind, an' she'll no' scratch ye." In fact, his own negro factotum, Mr. Jackson, "a gentleman of color," who "carried the banner," for the Otis family, in feudal style, had remarked, as Jack's own college chum had "bet the queen to win," in a singular alliance, founded upon the sudden discovery of a "peerless beauty" of strange antecedents, "The most prettiest snakes, has often, the most pizenist skins!"

Mr. John Wayne Otis held the Admiralty Court of Love in solemn session, for some time, as he walked the deck, the secret admiration of certain shy sisters, and falling even under the approving eye of Mrs. Hammond. "All that boy needs, is a little drawing out," murmured Milly, gazing at the neat form of the young athlete, whose clustering brown curls, bright gray-blue eyes, sweeping brown mustache, and sunny face, gave a cheering brightness to the resolute character shown by his broad brow. The well-cut classic head, with its regular features, square jaw and carven soldierly chin, showed a man, not a mere mask of life. Deceptive were his "summer grays," for with a crimson handkerchief knotted over a forehead under which gleaming eyes set in the frenzy of America's Olympian games, Jack Otis had shown the finest gleaming brown torso, and sternest whipcord muscles, in the whole crew, when the captain of the eight had yelled "Now," and, un-

der the eyes of his sweet "college girl," he had helped to thrash Yale, in a never forgotten victory. To use the words of that pretty girl, long since drifted far away on matrimonial seas, "Jack Otis was all there."

In his moody unrest, the young man felt himself drifting into the grip of the rosy God. He murmured, "I can't give her up. I will not. It is Kismet! 'The honey dew has been dropped upon mine eyes.' His dainty work! Cupid,

> "The God of Love, and, Benedicite,
> How mighty and how great a lord is he!"

A sudden interruption caused the adjournment of the Admiralty Court, sine die. Miss Gladys Lyndon appeared upon the deck, "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall, and most divinely fair." Jack, the prudent, at a glimpse of her wind-blown golden hair, as he saw the willing breezes take her in fee, when his eyes rested upon her glowing face, and the winds swept her robe into gracefully clinging folds, abandoned entirely the judicial view of the case; for, Samuel Taylor Coleridge must have had in his poetic eye the vision of a pretty woman, the beloved of the elements, the sister of the nodding roses, a graceful goddess striding on the deck, when he daintily hymned:

> "Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> All are but ministers of love,
> And feed his sacred flame."

Your roguish Dan Cupid is even yet, a great lover of high winds and rainy days, "when the rain it raineth every day."

Jack, the deceitful, rather over-vaunted his knowledge of the musical circles of Paris, on this very afternoon. When the stars slowly swung past them that night, Mr. John Wayne Otis treasured the banker's address of the

young lady in Paris, "and, had formally tendered his services," having a vague idea too, of developing his own voice! The "sacred flame" was so plenteously fed, that the Bostonian's brow was gloomy indeed, as he glowered at Mr. Frederick Wyman, in triumph aiding the ladies at the Liverpool landing float in the "usual formalities."

The night before their arrival Otis had taken counsel of his heart. With a singular originality of mind he reflected that his own personal status and history was nebulous enough to the woman, whose eyes now bade him hope, for it was the summer-time of life to them both, and, they strayed away on different paths, that last night, in the Irish sea, to secretly meet in Dreamland. "I would only be a mad fool to thrust myself upon her, now," the anxious Bostonian was forced to decide. "But, I will watch over her. I will be near her in the strange land of her new residence. Behind the cloud of her prudence, there is no dark hidden story of the past. This is the one fair maid, of all the world for me," he swore, in his loving heart of hearts; "and, she shall know yet, though parted, that my heart goes out to her, God bless her! in her lonely fight for fame, and I may yet be all in all to her, for, fame alone never filled the heart of any loving woman!" Still, he saw certain things, only as through a glass darkly, and his note book bore these lines, expressive of the state of a mind, vowed solemnly once to architectural research, when he saw her disappear from his sight at Liverpool, for they went different ways:

LIKE SHIPS THAT PASS.

Your soul, its fluttering signal showed,
My darling, in those dreaming eyes;
Whose fringing lashes could not hide
The depths of Love's sweet Paradise.
Far from the world, you came to me,
A sea-born vision, memory's glass,

Will bring you back, though swept away,
Like ships that pass, like ships that pass.

I may not read the blushes, sweet,
Which mantled on your glowing cheek;
I dare not linger at your side,
'Twere vain to hope, 'twere mad to speak.
Gray distance hides you now, afar,
My griefs, a love-racked heart harass;
Good-bye; hope's ensign flutters down,
Like ships that pass, like ships that pass.

Perchance some favoring gale of life,
On the uncertain, heaving sea
Of Fate, may blow from happier shores,
And, waft you, dearest, back to me.
Your head at rest upon my breast,
Your eyes, twin guiding stars, alas!
'Tis vain to dream; their light is lost,
Like ships that pass, like ships that pass.

A raw, sloppy day in London welcomed the arrival of the travelers by the Britannic. Brave, defiant Milly Hammond finally extracted a frozen smile of recognition and adieu, at the station, from Mrs. Pauline Buford. "Ah! I will pay you off yet," the fair condottieri muttered, for the vociferous General Hiram had found time enough to secretly squeeze her hand, and then murmur:

"Don't forget, it only rests with you, to keep Wyman safely out of the way."

She demurely whispered: "Trust me. I'll fix all that."

He roared out a genial horse laugh, as he debouched toward the Langham, with his tribe.

Miss Minnie Buford enjoyed a most vicious pleasure in tying up some of Frederick Wyman's future days, with a galling half-confidence, half-promise, murmured in words which, while insinuating her ownership of the candidate for Nob Hill honors, still left her free.

"And now, for Paris!" gaily cried Wyman, who had privately arranged with the imposing Buford for a speedy return, after the financial launching and the subsequent good time.

In the wilds of the Charing Cross Hotel, Mrs. Milly Hammond severely matronized Gladys Lyndon, while Wyman, piloted by the accomplished Morani, visited the city in search of the hard golden portraiture (slightly flattered), of the estimable Queen Victoria.

Gladys Lyndon, vaguely reminded of the loss of Otis, was depressed and nervous, as she gazed out on the smoky sky. The cheerless Thames, the unfamiliar surroundings, reminded her of the coming "fight to the finish" against both fate and obscurity.

"I hope that I shall see him again soon," she murmured, with a sudden flood of tears, as she turned away from the window pane, sheeted with a driving rain. It would have made Jack Otis' heart leap up in joy, on his lonely way, had he known the personal pronoun was relative to him, alone, of all the world.

A strangely startled man was Mr. Frederick Wyman, jolting along to the bank, when Morani slyly whispered: "I saw that man Hooper, the runaway broker, on the street when I went out, but, lost him in the crowd. I tried to follow him."

"Your fortune is made if you can find that man, when we come back," cried Wyman.

And, the valet smiled, "Then, I'll run him down for you."

But, Wyman was lost in a new fear.

BOOK III.

TRYING THE TITLE.

CHAPTER XI.

FRESH FIELDS AND PASTURES NEW.

"How shall we manage to slip away from Gladys, for the fortnight before you go over to London?" merrily queried Mrs. Milly Hammond, as she sat in the very prettiest morning costume, at breakfast, with Mr. Frederick Wyman a few days later at the Grand Hotel in Paris. It was only a brief time after their arrival, but Miss Lyndon was already absent, making a final selection of her "pension," and definitely arranging the details of her finishing musical course with the greatest of living vocal masters. Wyman was now contented and happy, for the girl seemed here to realize to the full the great bond of obligation between them, and the as yet, unpaid debt of his great generosity. "She will come around all right soon. A little loneliness will melt her," thought Wyman, twisting his mustache with quite the air of a "flaneur."

"Bless your simple soul," answered the sybarite miner, to the anxious Milly, "nothing is easier. Gladys is music mad, and, her eyes are turned in on herself. Now,

I have been down at the American Exchange. I have found a very snug nest out at St. Cloud. All that you must do, is to receive a sudden telegram that one of your most intimate San Francisco friends is very ill at Neuilly, and, you must go and stay a few days with her. Once out there, you are all right. I will drop in and see our budding prima donna myself, every day or so, and, as I will have received letters from you, I will bring her all the news."

"Good! Good," cried the fair flower of Van Ness avenue, as she blew him a kiss over the crystal rim of her wine glass. "She goes to her pension to-night, and we can go to Saint Cloud then; but," the fair frolicsome dame continued, "suppose we should meet her in the street?" A sudden alarm shook the lady's nerve.

"All that you will want is a veil handy for our town excursions," lightly answered Wyman. "Besides," he gaily cried, as he leaned towards her, with glowing eyes, "I am tired of all this make-believe life. You are not likely to ever meet her where I will take you. Milly you shall now see Paris, in style," he ardently cried,— "fresh fields and pastures new! Now, I can give you just two weeks, and it is for you, little woman, to set the place, for, I have really some important business in London."

His brow clouded as he thought of the forger Hooper's presence in London. "The one man on earth I have a just cause to fear, and, I suppose he has that she-devil still with him. He must be trying some clever new dodge, for, if recognized, he might be called on from Scotland Yard; and, there are always plenty of San Francisco men in London who might recognize him." The capitalist strolled out of the breakfast-room, and entering his apartment, rang for Morani. A few whispered directions caused that smart son of Belial to grin in a furtive manner.

"All right, sir!" he smiled, but, I must know the name to use for the luggage, you know." Wyman laughed.

"Clean off all the old marks on our traps, both hers and mine." He indicated the breakfast-room, where a thrilling voice was caroling away in glee. The Burgundy was excellent. "By the way, Tony," questioned the master, "how was this fellow Hooper got up?"

"Oh! quite the city gent, sir; English business style, smooth shaven, London togs, sir; looked quite at home and was taking it very easy. He didn't look afraid, but like a regular business man."

"Ah!" mused Wyman, as he rejoined Milly Hammond, "I suppose that Vinnie and Hooper are going in now, too, 'for fresh fields and pastures new,' with a safe change of names also." And, he laughed as he kissed Milly's wine-burdened eyelids.

"Who are we to be, anyway? that is, at St. Cloud. What is our royal name?" His velvet-eyed companion blushed, and then smiled demurely.

"Fred," she said as she readjusted the flowers in her corsage, "let it be 'Mr. and Mrs. Burnham.' We will yet, need to use the whole alphabet, I am sure."

"All right!" rejoined her friend in need. "I'll be baptized so, through Morani. I'll send him now over with the traps. We start, after Gladys goes to her "musical tread mill."

That night, in the wee sma' hours, as "Mrs. Burnham" looked out on a pretty fragrant bower at St. Cloud, after an exciting evening wherein the "elephant" was slyly peeped at, she smiled and said:

"Fred, this is life itself, and, you are a darling boy;" whereat, Mr. Frederick Wyman smiled in the modest consciousness of well doing, and gently answered:

"I think I, too, shall like Paris." He was now without a

single care in the world. "That fellow Strong," he murmured, "is left, left out in the cold; left 'by a large majority!'" And, he was wise in his own conceit.

It was a most peculiar irony of fate which had torn Counselor Waldo Strong away from an increasing legal business in San Francisco, to make some quiet private researches in Virginia City, on the subject of the Hooper forgeries. There were some sturdy English directors away in London who were greatly interested in the bank which had been principally victimized. The San Francisco manager, too, nursed a vain hope of recouping some of the heavy losses by future quiet researches into the old affairs of Hooper, Bowen & Co. in the State of Nevada.

Waldo Strong, who had thrown himself back into his professional work with a mad desire to win his way once more to wealth, to where he might yet offer fortune and a home to the vanished singer, accepted the representation of the powerful bank in this legal quest "I may find out here some clue to this cold-hearted scoundrel Wyman's dark deeds up there," he muttered, and so forth he sallied, too, to graze "in fresh woods and pastures new." His heart was very sore within him, for he had long unavailingly tried to trace the pathway of the fair child of promise, whom he worshiped with all the hidden ardor of a fiery heart, burning under his cold exterior. Gladys Lyndon had come into his life "as comes the summer wind," and now, there was only darkness in his soul!

There were new tenants in the Van Ness avenue mansion, and the cautious agent could only give him a banker's address in New York City, for the forwarding of letters. "I presume Mrs. Hammond will be traveling in the East yet for some time, as the house is let for a year. That, is all that I know. Her husband, —" and then, both men joined in Strong's involuntary laugh.

On the first night, when Mr. Strong had obtained permission to begin a search of the Virginia City mining records, out of hours, his mind wandered far away in search of the fair goddess with the shining eyes. He little knew that she, herself, in the cold, cheerless sham comfort of a Parisian pension, looked out at the moon shining down there in alien skies. She was herself wandering "in fresh woods and pastures new," and, had been most easily restrained, by her promise to the adroit Mrs. Hammond, not to write to California at present. "It would never do, my darling," said the very circumspect Mrs. Hammond, "that we should be generally known to have voyaged, on the same steamer with Mr. Wyman! People are so uncharitable," and, the good, circumspect lady sighed.

Blessed be ignorance! Blessed be the veil drawn over current events, by time and distance! Blessed be the friendly shades which hide from so many aching and throbbing hearts, that which it were a death-knell to hear, a last crushing misery to know! There are griefs which thus, in mercy, are delayed, to minimize the bitter pangs which tear, the rending agonies which crush the soul forever! Hope still shows its shining star to the absent one, where often, knowledge would bow the proud head, and bring the bitterest tears to loving eyes. So, blessed be the kindly demon, who hides that which is known, often alas! too soon, at the best—awful certainty!

Changed hearts, wayward fortunes, impending strokes of fate, these "days of grace," this kind nepenthe of loving doubt, of hoping against hope, are blessed easements in this weary world. So, the toiling, stern-hearted lawyer knew not that the woman he loved leaned out from the casement that night, and thought of a lover, in a sudden flash of self-knowledge, but, only of the absent Jack Otis.

Paris was so lonely to the ardent girl! The mincing formalities, the cold curiosity, the mechanical environment of the musical coterie she had drifted into chilled her. She hungered this night, for the clasp of Jack Otis' hand, for his clear ringing manly voice, the frank glance of his honest eyes, and alone, an ardent being touched with genius, "but yet a woman," a very woman, she sought her pillow in a flood of sudden tears. When ever did one loving soul suffice itself? "I wonder if I shall see him soon again?" she murmured, taking up the tender refrain of the loved and longing, and her gentle heart was not comforted, but yet, far out on the broken moon-lit waters of the broken Channel, John Wayne Otis of Boston, was conscious of a burning desire to hasten on the steamer, driving merrily ahead. "I am a fool," he fretted. "I suppose that she has half forgotten my face, but I'll very soon find out," he vigorously and cheerfully concluded.

Two weeks after the beginning of the little "stolen nest" lark at Saint Cloud, Mrs. Milly Hammond sat in the rose-bowered garden of the cottage, which had gaily sheltered "Mr. and Mrs. Burnham." The lines in the lady's pretty face were of the most sober cast of thought. She gazed furtively at Morani, who was deftly arranging their joint movables and assorting them for a special individual delivery; for, Mr. Frederick Wyman had driven over to Neuilly to post a decoy letter, informing Miss Gladys Lyndon of the convalescence of Milly's sick friend. Screening herself in an arbor, the lonely chatelaine was intently studying a brief letter of her own, with the London post-mark.

"It will be such a jolly lark," she smiled, "but, I fear I can only have half glimpses of London. Still, Buford is a solid sheet-anchor," she laughed lightly at her intending deception; "I will do as he wishes." Pretty traitress!

In good truth, Frederick Wyman had well exhausted the novelty of his hide-and-seek exploit. That very morning, he had received an imperative letter from the burly General Buford. The doughty, bloodless warrior wrote forcibly, if without Chesterfieldian elegance. "Telegraph me at the Langham, when you arrive. I'll wait for you there. I have now seen all my financial people here, and now's your time, to get in with them and, get solid. I'll give you a rattling good send-off. My own people want to get over to Paris, and, after I have fixed you up, we can go back there together, and have that little 'racket.' My ladies will be very busy a month with their shopping. That's our golden time, my boy."

Mr. Frederick Wyman was returning from sending a telegram, announcing his departure for London on the night train, when he accidentally stumbled over John Wayne Otis, of Boston. It was not singular that the two young men flashed glances of veiled, hostile inquiry, pointed mutely at each other. But, a few words of common place decided Otis to probe the situation a little as to the beautiful singer.

"Have you seen Miss Lyndon since her arrival? Do you know her present address?" the Bostonian casually demanded; and, Wyman, with a prompt politeness, too ready for the truth, professed his entire ignorance.

"I leave myself for London to-night, and then, may return to California," said the miner, with half-veiled eyes.

"And, Mrs.—Mrs. Hammond, her friend, do you happen to know where she is?" The mention of that name, reminded the deceitful Wyman that he must quickly prepare his bird of passage for her ostensible return to Paris. With a murmur of polite negation, Wyman bowed and then passed on.

"I do not propose to have that Yankee fool pick up

either of these two ladies. I will tell Milly some cock-and-bull story about my being followed, and, she can stay here and hover near Gladys in my absence. I can surely trust her, and she will post me if this "Yankee prince" looms up near Gladys, on the musical horizon."

Frederick Wyman was in a very happy mood, as he raced back to St. Cloud. His reports from Brown, the cashier, Wilder, and the main office of the "Lone Star," told him that all was well. "If I can now only 'work the London market' rightly, I can unload on these fat-witted Englishmen, and yet, have a practical control. The General can help me. I wonder what terms he would exact. There is a loose million dollars in the deal if it is well swung." In some queer premonitory way, Wyman felt that these "Lone Star" maneuvers were doomed to include a final procession under the wedding bell of orchids, with Miss Minnie Buford as his bride. "By Heaven! I might do worse. The connection is a right royal one for California," and the crafty Wyman mused with a deliberately-planned rapid scheme, in which he shone out as the Faust, and, lonely Gladys Lyndon was cast as Marguerite!

"I have it," he smiled. "A long engagement with Minnie, say a year. Before then, Buford must be made to do yeoman's work for me here. I can so be free to see Gladys at will. The winter will bring to her the lonely hours, and I'll send Milly Hammond home in the spring. Then the coast is clear. Yes! That's my plan," he smiled wickedly. The fruit was near his hand!

As Wyman enjoyed his cigar, gazing at the world's circus of pleasure in the crowded Bois, the woman "he could trust" was reading for the first time the letter she had received at St. Cloud; for General Buford knew the address of Mrs. Burnham, and they had their

little "private game" of larks, such larks! "I will telegraph you to your bankers' care the moment Wyman actually arrives. Then, come on to London, quietly, at once, alone. The address which I enclose will be your home. I have a party there in charge who will expect you. I will come there to you at once. Simply telegraph to me at my bankers when you will arrive in London. The people at the house will immediately notify me. You must, however, be my close prisoner for this 'peep at London' trip. You will have some one, though, to conduct you where we cannot be with each other, and thus spare you lonely hours."

The locality, "St. John's Wood," was for the first time made known to the daring western traveler by the address slip. "It is such a lark," she smiled, "and Fred, such a joke if he should find out!" She smiled grimly. "No, he will not, for the General has far more to lose than I have—that tiger-cat wife, but, I'll lead her a dance." Milly's velvet eyes hardened.

When the rosy morning tinted the flowery close of St. Cloud, Mrs. Hammond had deftly rejoined the girl whose days of incessant professional work had begun. When Wyman, returning ostensibly from Neuilly, had with a forced solicitude, tenderly bade her a passionate adieu at the station restaurant, where they dined together before he departed for London, he felt for the first time, the slight galling of the rosy chain.

"You will not be lonely without me, Milly," he said, "for you have Gladys here to watch over. Don't fail to telegraph to me if you need anything, and throw that fellow Otis off the track, if you meet him by any chance." As Mr. Wyman uncoiled himself from Milly's clinging arms, and the train drew out, the gay dissembler laughed, "What a lark!" as she drove back to her hotel. "What a lark I will have!"

Mr. Frederick Wyman felt that he had now entered upon a golden tide of good fortune, as he discussed his plans, with the clear-headed General in a private room at the "Langham" the next evening. He was most charmingly located under the social wing of his new friend. He had long and deeply thought of the ugly problem of James Walter Hooper, the one dangerous wolf on his blind trail. "He would not dare to face me here, but, he might blab, in his cups, something to hurt me later."

So a Parisian friend of the expectant Morani was now temporarily installed as Wyman's valet. "What's your plan, Tony?" the captalist had demanded, as he had conferred while crossing the Channel with his alert man.

"I am going to earn my reward money," the servitor smiled. "It's not so very hard, I hope, but, you must give me a free hand and release me for every moment of your stay."

"Do all you will, spend all the money you want, only find him!" cried the master. "Now, what's your final plan?" Tony scratched his head in deep thought.

"This fellow, you see, looked as if he was got up 'strictly for business,' when I saw him. He was very intent, eager, and, headed down toward the city. He was well 'brushed up' to a London city air. Now, sir, he would not dare to show himself in any society. He would not be able to hang around the hotels and exchanges, too many Californians always there. He never was a sport, and he could only use his clerky talents in some new scheme here. I have an idea that if I watch Temple Bar from nine till five for a whole business week, he will surely fall under my eye. He does something in the city. It's the only road in."

"By Heavens! you have it," cried Wyman, who had just studied up his guide books and been coached by

Morani for his London outings. "Follow him, follow him to Constantinople, but, don't lose him from sight. Here's a hundred pounds. Telegraph me at the 'Langham.' You can go up, get your new man in trim and arrange my affairs. Then, sir, you are only a detective, until you succeed or I get tired."

"I'll catch him. That fellow will have something to do around the banks, and with money. He'll try and stay here in London, for you tell me he speaks no foreign languages. He would be lost on the Continent. His talents would be lost there."

Wyman himself would have lost his complacency, if he could have seen the overjoyed "pilgrim from Boston" now seated at the side of Miss Gladys Lyndon in Paris on this very evening. Mr. Otis had discovered a pressing necessity for Miss Lyndon, indulging in out-door walks, "at reasonable intervals," and, he had already promised to point out to her the salient "architectural" features of Paris! To further disconcert the smiling schemer, Mrs. Hammond was even then, out of Paris, a new Cleopatra speeding over on her voyage to meet a most prosaic Antony, in the person of General Hiram Buford, who had promptly telegraphed to her the fact of her lover's arrival.

While Mr. Wyman had discovered the meaning of the proverb "Toujours perdrix," still, he might have decided not to implicitly trust the two people now nearest to him, had his youthful vanity been tried by a knowledge of the graceful Milly's artful escapade. Had he known! Had he known! He would have been far more circumspect, for General Buford proceeded at once to a frank statement of his proposed attitude towards the "Lone Star" operation.

"Of course, you are aware I can place you at once where a year of your own unaided efforts or any amount of social posturing would not. Our own companions, our

bankers, our connections here, are all powerful! If you thus successfully approach the great London promoters, the men who float all the vast enterprises here, you must let me in on the 'ground floor.' I must be liberally considered. I expect my own name to weigh in this as far as the British capital, or your mine.

"But, you are new to London. You wish to look about a bit; to see the general features. I have many private things to attend to. You can now think this over. I will go down to the city a couple of hours every day with you, and gradually bring you into the upper money circles. In the evenings, I will have to leave you to Mrs. Buford and my daughter. You will naturally wish to see the general amusements, and so, get a bit acclimated. It will leave me my afternoons and evenings, for my 'own work,' of which I have a vast deal before me!"

Wyman bowed assent as the General blushed one shade, in a sudden realization that "St. John's Wood," and the reception of the modernized "Cleopatra" was his most exigent "piece of business" now "pressing on his overburdened mind." "The women will nail him down strictly to escort duty," mused Buford, "but, we had better circulate cautiously, Milly and I, on the other side of the Thames."

The days passed by in a realization of the drift of several strange undercurrents in the life of the scattered voyagers by the Britannic. A pleased twinkle in the eyes of General Buford indicated a great internal mental satisfaction, and his deference to and liberality with his watchful spouse, enchanted that proud lady. Mr. Wyman was daily weighing in the scales of his mental balances the possibilities and advisability of delivering himself up, as a pledged captive "to her own bow and spear," to the alert, emerald-eyed Miss Minnie.

The very jolliest little episodes of all the night life in shady St. John's Wood were the enlivening features of Mrs. Hammond's "seclusion," and, the lynx-eyed Morani gazed with an ill-concealed impatence daily on the thousands streaming under Temple Bar. "Here, I must, and will, hook my queer fish, right here," the wearied watcher swore in his heart.

There were now few idle moments for the now efflorescent Californian schemer in these days. Busied in the day with General Buford, in worming his way into the ranks of the London money ring, Mr. Frederick Wyman at night superintended the preparation of the prospectus of the "Lone Star Mining Company of London (Limited)." When not dancing attendance upon the haughty ladies of the Buford family in their vigorous search for new pleasures, Wyman did not have time to miss General Buford, whose "affairs in St. John's Wood," now demanded a great deal of his valuable evening time.

The new rising international speculator indited, now and then, a brief note, simple but fervent, to Mrs. Hammond at Paris. His brow was radiant as he learned that Miss Lyndon's voice had been approved by the great Paris singing master, and, that the "tall perfect blonde" was feverishly studying, her heart fired with ambition. Mrs. Hammond's replies to his letters, neatly remailed in Paris, thankfully acknowledged all her remittances, and also described herself as "going" around on little trips "with a California friend," and, "having a very good time." General Hiram Buford guffawed in a secret glee over these "artful dodgers."

The literary corps who were busied at the Langham, with the formal preparation of the classic "prospectus" of the "Lone Star," sat knee deep in maps, memoranda and exemplars of similar kinds of prospectus word painting.

When the list of directors, with the proud roll of agents, counsel, depositories, and other needed adjuncts, was finally completed, with the fairy-tale sketch of the future "workings of the mine," Wyman was almost led to believe a part of the artful story, so deftly had the pen embroidered the cold substratum of facts, with the poetic flowers of financial bombast. A list of Members of Parliament, retired Admirals and Major Generals, Queen's Counsel, sons of Earls, and a sprinkling of Baronets, gave a social tone to the names of the well-known bankers and brokers, whose long togas were now stenciled with another company title. Vive la Humbug!

The active campaign was soon to be left to the great inner circle of human sharks, for, Wyman had now finally agreed with General Buford upon a large aliquot share, of what was known to him, as the "swag."

"You see, my dear boy, I furnish you all these 'shining ones,' in a batch. You will then have free hands, and you and I will swing the mine out West there, on our own inside lines. In other words, all we get here out of this 'blooming British public,' is so much clear gain. We will ourselves soak up the real output of the mine!"

Wyman was lost in admiration of the effective business rascality of the keen-eyed General, who was only ludicrous when he swam clumsily along, oiling the seas of society with his unwieldly bulk, or else disported himself under his absurd militia title, as an occidental Marlborough. When there was anything tangible to steal, in sight, the General, however, became keen, eager, clear-headed, and a most effective conspirator.

"All you have to do now, my dear Wyman, is to see that the London expert is properly handled out there! As soon as the 'prospectus' goes out, we will dispatch him West. From what you tell me, Horace Wilder, Brown,

your private secretary, Hopkins, and your man at the mine, will entertain him, and also, watch him day and night. Don't let any hostile outside influences prejudice him. I have had him secretly ordered to confer with the joint manager of the Anglo-California Bank while he is out there. I bank there myself, and, a word from me would smooth away any little roughness. You can so write Wilder and Brown to cable you, if all is satisfactory. Your title is clear and without a flaw?" The General's eyes were keen in their questioning. Wyman never winced.

"Not a speck! not a break! I believe that I have the clearest records of any property on the Comstock," heartily replied Wyman, "and, what is more, I have a producing mine to show them, too. My mine is a fact, a solid fact."

"I am glad of that," genially cried Buford, as he engulfed a mammoth brandy and soda, and then prepared for a flitting to join the piquant Milly, who now ruled him lightly, holding him "by a single hair." Yet, that elastic tie drew him, daily, to the bower where his "fayre Rosamond" nightly did greatly disport herself, as they planned at leisure the management of that little nest in San Francisco, that secluded bower, which would afford "the General" "a retired place to think things over," and also, give him such selected company as Mrs. Hammond might be enabled to quietly gather; for, her little retreat was to be a sort of palace of the Principessa Negroni, where Buford would essay the "Maffio Orsini" role, and, Madame Hammond, for those occasions, would gather in such local rosebuds as pleased the wayward fancy of the mighty man of Nob Hill. A pleasant bower!

Buford turned back at the door with a thoughtful brow. "If there were the slightest chance of any delay or trouble

out there, I would go out myself with the expert if I were you; but as you have the title and mine sound, we can have our little fling in Paris and wait results in safety. We'll make Rome howl!"

Wyman's only impending trouble now was the lurking shadow of Hooper, somewhere buried in the vast human Babel of London. "That scoundrel is sharp! Mr. Jim the Penman is a cur at heart I do not think that Vinnie would let him blackmail me. But, any anonymous letter, any veiled demand, any mean trick, might cost me very dear now." These gloomy thoughts strangely haunted Wyman as he drove by daily, and saw the tireless Morani still lurking on his lonely watch at Temple Bar.

In their evening conferences, the cheery valet stoutly maintained his pet theory. "He's a shy bird, but, I will finally get him. He may watch for you, for the American Register and the papers have bandied your name all around in connection with General Buford's family party; but me, he would despise and overlook." And so, Tony stoutly kept his watch.

On a visit to the city a week later, Wyman was startled one morning, to find his detective gone from his post. "Ah! he has scented his game at last!" Wyman cried. And it was true, for on his return, at four o'clock in the afternoon, after a final conference with the "Inner committee," for, the great prospectus was now launched, the valet was still absent. The miner's heart burned in impatience, until his dove should return from the stormy human sea with tidings. "I shall know the whole truth soon, reflected Wyman as the face of the missing forger haunted him, during a dinner, charmingly tête-à-tête with the ladies, into whose inner heart havens he had now easily glided, for Vinnie Hinton and Mrs. Hammond had so adroitly polished their western diamond, that Wyman began to shine with a certain luster of his own!

He was mistaken in the voice of his eager anxiety, for it was very late when the tired Morani entered his master's sleeping room, and the adroit little liar used the truth very gingerly, doling out only a part thereof! He scented much future gold. "I may as well find out now, just how much I am to get, when it will materialize, and begin to plant my nest eggs a bit. Such a lucky turn won't come every day." The sly valet dreamed of a snug little hotel in Paris, with some roguish-eyed Parisienne to play Madame Boniface, as his assistant; and, he knew so many nice girls, too!

That eventful morning, Antonio Morani had needed all his cool nerve, as loitering in a doorway, for the ten thousandth time invoking his patron saint, the holy Anthony, the sturdy form of the fugitive criminal, James Walter Hooper, passed under the old London landmark, once a neat receptacle for hidden archives, and very neatly topped off with dead traitors' heads.

He held his breath as he stood in a doorway, not two yards from his human prey. It was the same old San Francisco Hooper, only decorous, and, seemingly, an average British citizen, in his exterior. The absence of all ornament, the democratic Derby hat, and even the well brushed clothes, suited to an upper clerk, bespoke the ordinary business man, who would not disdain a chop and pot of beer. Hooper stalked along and he held his umbrella as the average private in the great London working army. But, he was marching along with a directness of purpose which indicated the man of fixed habits. "You'll not give me the slip this time," murmured Mr. Tony Morani, as he glided on in the wake of the penman.

It had been a very painful ordeal to Morani to part with his natty mustache. He had sacrificed it on the altar of Duty, and so the snug lines of his face took on the super-

natural gravity of an actor out of employ, or a priest temporarily out of canonicals. Down Fleet street, along they sped, and at last in a little side alley of High Holborn, the man whom he followed entered a small office, dingy and mean enough in its externals. The opening door showed only a glimpse of a little back room. The two windows allowed a plain desk and chair to be seen, and the modest sign "Compton, Money Broker," ornamented the one door, on a dingy tin label. "Ah! at his old trade," the valet murmured, as passing by at intervals of every fifteen minutes, he satisfied himself by stolen glimpses that he had at last located the working den of the once brilliant San Francisco broker. A stolid-looking office boy sat waiting orders, or moving around in answer to his employer, who several times appeared from the inner room in an "office coat," with pen behind ear.

Morani craftily surveyed the vantage of the ground, and was delighted to observe a cheap public almost directly opposite, from whence, seated at a convenient table, he could observe the door of the humble den. The greasy copy of "Bell's Life," a few judiciously timed pots of beer, and a leisurely luncheon, beguiled some of the waiting hours. "He is a close bird," mused Morani, for he noted the lad bearing a comfortable tray from an ambitious restaurant near. "But, I must track him to his home."

It was very easy for Morani to waylay the office lad, on his return with the dishes an hour later.

"Ah, right in, on in there. Compton? yes! In the back office. He's in there now."

The dull lad vouchsafed no reply to a casual query. The valet kept his dreary watch up all day.

"À la fin!" joyously cried Morani, at half-past four, when, to his great relief, he saw Hooper walk out of the office, a top-coat and umbrella indicating his flitting. But,

instead of returning on his morning path, the ex-broker walked most briskly down toward Blackfriar's Bridge. Almost within sight of the steamer landing, with the swing of easy habit, Hooper entered the hallway of a neat lodging house, using a latch-key.

"Now I'm in for it," the wearied watcher growled, "but, I'll plant a man on him to-morrow. If he lives here, I will have him traced at both places, shadowed softly. I'll have his whole game in a week. He's a fixture here."

While the puzzled Frenchman studied various plans of getting into the lodging house, his last, being to get a garb and tray from a neighboring foreign restaurant, and then, knock at every door in search of an imaginary lodger, the street door briskly opened, and Solomon in all his glory was no more richly arrayed than the transcendent swell who passed the astonished valet unthinkingly! It was Hooper, but lo! as a man of Hyde Park and Pall Mall. From an "every day young man," he had bloomed into a "glass of fashion." His figure had even acquired a certain military dignity, with his Albert frock, silk hat and gold rimmed eye glasses. In his stride and bearing, he was entirely another man. A neat wrap on his arm, a richly mounted umbrella and gloves of pristine freshness, gave him the air of a clubman. Tony stared, and yet, there was no time for thought as Morani raced after the elastic stride of the newly born D'Orsay, and just brushed into the line in time to get a ticket on the same up-river steamer.

"So, my man, it's a little game of hide-and-seek with the world is it?" muttered Morani, as he adjusted a pair of dark-colored eye-shades, and stationed himself near the wheel houses.

Landing after landing was passed, and it was only when

the boat neared Chiswick, that the Frenchman saw signs of expectancy in the elegant apparition of the fugitive forger. In the bustle of making the landing, Morani only fixed his eyes upon the back of his victim. He almost screamed as he sprang behind a waiting fly, for there, in a pretty pony phaeton, behind a very dashing team, in beauty more than ever bright, sat Vinnie Hinton, the vanished queen of light loves! A natty tiger, perched behind, gazed with calm disdain at the stable lad giving the spirited horses some chilled water. With a good-humored nod, Hooper tossed the lad a coin, and then the resplendent parasol of the Pacific beauty, lowly drooping, shaded the fleeing lovers.

As the phaeton leisurely moved away, Morani sprang out and seized the stable lad.

"Do you know that gentleman and lady?" he queried, as he held up a florin. The youth extended his eager hand.

"Heverybody knows the Hailey Osgoods. Bless you! He's got an awful nice villa here. They're just back from Australia, with heaps of tin. This man will drive you up there." And thus in a few moments, Morani was trundling on in pursuit, keeping easily in fair range.

In fifteen minutes, he had driven all round the confines of as neat a villa as nestles on the banks of the silver Thames. The family party had leisurely entered their own grounds. A convenient hostelry enabled the artful Morani, under the genial influence of the beer pump, to extract the needed local details and family history. He was soon leisurely occupied in his enjoyment of a cigar, in the gloaming.

"So, Mr. Hooper Compton Hailey Osgood, I will put my chum, mon cher Alphonse, to watch this little nest. I will mark you down. I will follow your wanderings myself the next day, and, if I mistake not, your little game

is not ripe yet, neither is mine! Mr. Frederick Wyman shall know only just what he pays for, bit by bit, and when he knows a great deal, he will have paid a very great deal. That's my motto, 'Cash upon delivery!'"

It thus fell out, that Wyman implicitly believed Morani's untruthful evening report, that he had followed Hooper into an office building, in Holborn, and, after shadowing the entrance for a while, to his dismay he found there was a front of the building on the other street. "But, you see, sir, he is here, and I will mark him down. He has some business in the city."

Wyman, who pitlessly lied to the whole world, who was himself a cheat and a villain, never for a moment fancied that his own crafty valet was an humble brother of the craft of traitor scoundrels. He bowed his head in thought, as the valet ended his story. "I must get that fellow Hooper out of the way. Even if I were to denounce him at Scotland Yard. Fool I am to fret," he mused. "An anonymous letter to the agencies of the bank here will do the business. The banks which he swindled were two of them English, with their head offices here. Transportation or state's prison for twenty years awaits him. In either case, as a felon, his future testimony is forever barred out. I must find him and have him locked up before my deal is well on, while I am preparing to attack the London market. He reads all the journals. It would be a risk."

"Tony," the miner said, "I have soon to go to Paris. I'll give you six months if you need it to find this man! A hundred pounds a month I give you for 'extras,' your regular salary goes on, and a thousand pounds as a present, if you locate him, so that I can get at him, without exciting the least suspicion. I will leave you behind here. I want you not to fail to run him down. There's your first one hundred pounds, and a fifty for a starter as reward for

your week's work. Don't fail me now. Don't lose him again."

"I'll have him for you, long before the end of the six months," cried the happy valet, who softly chuckled as he obtained his last orders.

At a neat little private supper, an hour later, Morani opened the gate of Paradise, to a pretty dark-eyed French waif whom he had found in those dim circles, where high grade London servants often have more gay enjoyment than the blasé children of fashion whom they serve.

"I will now install my own household, very near to the Hailey Osgood villa, and there, cultivate the graces of country life," Morani decided. And it was true that his days ran on in peace and plenty, as he carefully followed the curious meanderings of Mr. Compton, the busy city money broker by day, and his elegant twin brother "Hailey Osgood" of the evening, the whole-souled Australian emigré. The snappy-eyed Parisienne deftly lingered on the path of Mrs. Hailey Osgood who was blooming out as a moss rose, a very dewy blossom of correct country life.

"But, for my life," the puzzled valet spy said two weeks later, "I can not see the object of this fellow's attention to such a petty little business; for, only a few occasional foreigners, mostly Jews of humble appearance, or impecunious-looking London clerks ever profaned the dingy office of 'Compton, Money Broker.'" Yet, Morani gradually learned that all checks signed "Compton" were known to be easily passable in the neighborly money exchanges. There was some little activity now and then, and he himself tracked the ex-broker to the General Postoffice, where he often posted and sometimes received a large mail. "Is this cool rascal already at his old work," mused the spy. "I might warn and blackmail him." He noted a variety of changes in the homeward journey,

and a seasonable variation of "Mr. Hailey Osgood's" dress, but always assumed at the same lodging-house.

Vinnie Hinton never left Chiswick. What held her charms in obscurity? Hooper was known as "a nice, quiet gentleman," at his lodging rooms, one who used the room only for rest and convenience when in town, and for his occasional down-town writing. "Visitors he has, oh, yes, but always gentlemen, mostly strangers to London." A reasonable flirtation with the slavey of that lodging-house yielded Tony this report, and nothing more.

"I will let this whole down-town thing go," decided Tony in digust at seeing the daily prosaic honesty of the fugitive's humble city life. "The villa life is the thing to probe! There, I will find the key to the riddle. His scheme lies there. What is it?"

Before Mr. Frederick Wyman had been carousing two weeks longer in Paris, a curling black full beard began to line out the face of his London representative. It flowed out in a hairy disguise which buried the delicacy of the Frenchman's features, and his locks were Absalomic. "When this is at its full growth, my own mother would not know me," proudly declared the happy Gaul. "I can very safely approach the mansion as a French cook in search of employ. I can interview the servants, but, ah! not Madame. Never!"

The great delegation of two, from San Francisco had majestically crossed the Channel on pleasures bent, preceded by the fluttering winged dove, Mrs. Milly Hammond, who flew out first by several days. The gentle eyes of the unsuspecting Gladys Lyndon were not even lifted in question as Mrs. Hammond artfully detailed her various movements, for, in truth, the days had passed in a dream to the girl whose unceasing studies were only broken by

the frequent visits of the "gentleman from Boston." In a rapidly growing daily companionship, with the sweet secretive sense of hitherto unknown feelings still in their bud, the lonely orphan instinctively held Otis apart from the two companions of her voyage. He seemed to fill a separate niche in her heart. And in her own inner soul, the sweet newer life, into which she was daily drifting, seemed to have its sacredly-treasured secret. Her one friend.

Frederick Wyman was overjoyed on arrival at the semi-detached state of his renewed relations with the wanderer from Van Ness avenue. It suited his newer secret game! "You see, Milly," he confidentially murmured, "these San Francisco people are all so sharp-eyed. It would never do for us to be seen too frequently together." A gleam of quiet happiness lit up Milly Hammond's eyes when she gracefully yielded to her lover's suggestion that she should inhabit the Hotel Athenée, while the new financial partners ornamented the Grand Hotel. "I can, in this arrangement, always drop in quietly to see you," pleaded Wyman. It was equally convenient for Hiram, alas! "In the meantime go about, my little one, and see all the world you can. Lose nothing, not a single pleasure, on my account."

"I will not, Fred," modestly replied his friend! "But, I will be a bit lonely, now and then."

In fact, the lady was lonely, so lonely that when Frederick Wyman, Esq., was airing his new Poole dress-suit at the opera, in charge of the haughty Buford ladies, or engaged in other definite occupations, "the dear old General" kindly took a short walk and cheered up the fair pilgrim, Milly, who literally kept "a lamp in the window" for him. It was a shining light for him, for Mrs. Hammond would have distinguished herself in the "signal

corps" of an Amazonian army, and in this fashion, everything was smoothly moving. All went merry as a marriage bell!

The social courage of the parvenu, Wyman, had risen to a considerable degree of audacity since he began working the London market. He copied Buford's dashing pompousness. Nothing emboldens like strident success. His every onward footstep had easily turned to gold so far, and he had also found all women so pliant, so easy to win, so light in the rein, so quickly tamed at his golden touch. Feeling daily that he was drifting in triumph, drifting toward the Golden Gate, where the mansion of the mighty Buford hovered high planted there, lit up with sparkling wedding lights in the happy, future days, when the "London Market" had been scientifically worked out, Wyman delicately shaded off his personal attentions to Mrs. Hammond. "She might ruin me with Minnie," he fancied. "I will go a little slowly, safely with her. She cannot help me, save as to Gladys, and that she must do. I can easily, by a handsome wardrobe and a pretended sudden change of plans, suggest her early homeward flitting, perhaps even alone."

He little dreamed that for the second time in Europe he was being betrayed by one of his nearest "incumbrances." He had also fallen, through over-confidence into a coarse and almost proprietary view of regarding his charming protegée, the Prima Donna of the future. She was in his power, almost at his disposal! It was a suggestion of his egoistic and brutal nature to often visit the musical student alone. "She will have to get used to me," he sneered. With no knowledge of the world, helpless and socially inexperienced, the gentle orphan at last, was forced to recognize the growing half-insolence of his manner and the gradual cessation of that deferential and florid

courtesy which had marked all his behavior on the voyage. She shuddered with an illy-defined fear which, as yet, took no definite shape.

And so far, there was no open betrayal of the "inner man." No frank unveiling of the Mokanna face. Before the frightened girl, in her lonely hours, there always rose up the great obligation which tied her to this man, more unwelcome in his every visit, and, once viewed as only the gateway to a golden future, his generosity seemed now to hide behind it some lurking, baleful purpose. And so, trembling in her shrinking helplessness, she waited mutely and only prayed for his early departure, and also that her new friend, Otis, should not be made a witness of a growing familiarity which she failed yet to view in its right light. Fear tied her lips. She was young, so fresh in the world's hard ways, and she had now not a single friend in the world. She dared not speak to Mrs. Hammond. Waldo Strong was far, far away, and penniless, she knew but too well!

But there was a shadow from the West slowly creeping on to darken the bright golden noon of the effulgent prosperity, which beamed in such torrid radiance on the haughty young owner of the "Lone Star."

It had been the engrossing labor of a whole week for Waldo Strong to trace back all the record entries, which referred to the members of one Hooper, Bowen & Co.'s syndicate, and he had extended the search of titles as regarded Wyman, back to the very beginning of the records. Long and deeply, did the grave-faced San Francisco lawyer ponder the history of the group of mines on the mountainside, which had been originally handled by the three operators. He was far too wise to attempt to show himself at the "Lone Star" mine, but, he easily learned that the mills would soon start up again, the disasters of the fire

being at last remedied, and the main shaft properly connected with the south end mines.

Seated alone, pondering over his note-book, Waldo Strong was astonished at the shadowy irregularity of all the holdings of Hooper and Bowen, under a mere assessment work sale. The conveyances of the Mariquita mine to Frederick Wyman by Robert Devereux, the original discoverer, seemed all regular, and yet, the absent Devereux had abandoned a large number of locations seemingly more promising, at the same time. "And, he seems to have acted very strangely. Wyman was his partner," the lawyer exclaimed. "Why did he not care for these interests of the absent man, or buy them in?" The singularity of the final transfer of Devereux's Mariquita interest at Truckee also gave him a certain uneasiness. In furtive conversation with several old timers, he finally discovered that Devereux had vanished from Virginia City very suddenly, gone away seemingly for a short stay, and had never returned, and had abandoned some properties, selling the rest for a mere nominal sum.

Strong had pushed his researches, and was now ready at last to depart for San Francisco. He walked out alone in the cool evening and wandered down to where he could see the whole group of mines in their relation to the great central vein. The whole debated property lay spread out before him. A great mountain spur, with a lone pine tree on its towering rugged crest, hung over the gloomy entrance to Grizzly Cañon. He could trace the location of the leading mines on the Comstock by the lights of the stamp mills pounding away night and day. Far below him, the silent mill and hoist-works of the "Lone Star" were dimly visible, only watchmen's lights in sight, save at the clustered offices and boarding houses.

The baffled counselor sat down on a boulder and mused

over the vanished past. "He seems to have got hold of this mine in a strangely lucky way. This man Devereux simply disappeared! It was even some time before the Truckee conveyance was placed on record." The disaster to the mine again returned to haunt him. The awful death of the hapless men cooped up therein. The sky was now overcast with clouds, and only a single bright star hovered over the mountain before him. A strangely added suspicion startled him as his eye rested on that star! "The mine, this very mine, the only rich one of all the Devereux locations, was first named 'the Mariquita.' Devereux himself so called it, and Wyman has promptly changed the name to the 'Lone Star.' Why did he do this?"

There was a strange voice which now seemed to whisper in Strong's ear the word "Murder!" He sprang to his feet! His nerves were thrilling weirdly in an unfamiliar fear. "I have over-studied myself into fantasies about this thing," he resolutely decided, as he turned and wandered back toward the hotel, "but, I will look up this whole Devereux history. If that man died and left heirs, they have a valuable interest in this Hooper-Bowen group. If there has been any hidden fraud, then even the 'Lone Star,' once the 'Mariquita,' is now a great stake to play for! I will search the San Francisco records of the express offices, the postal records, perhaps advertise. Robert Devereux himself may be found alive later, unless, unless, he was made away with. His abandoning so many locations looks very, very strange."

In his room, alone, the ruined lawyer speculator dreamed of the strange malevolent influence of the victorious Wyman over his own ruined future. "The scoundrel!" he groaned, "And, the very last I saw him, face to face, he was gazing at Gladys Lyndon; she is gone, but whither? The

poverty, the defeat, he has inflicted on me, has lost her to me forever, for fate has swept her form from my arms." And then the victim of adverse fortune lived over, in his solitary watch those hopeless imaginings which haunt the steadfast minds of the loving, those under the ban, who are doubly desolate, in finding themselves in the darkness, described by the one lone star shining down for them on life's long pathway. When that beloved ray is lost then all is wrapped in a two-fold gloom! His loneliness voiced itself in words addressed to one now far away!

ALONE.

Yon star swims, singly, now, on high,
Which gleams upon the lone tree nigh,
Alone! I trust that whispering pine,
This message from my heart, to thine!

Beloved one! My soul's one star!
Veiled from mine eyes, where'er you are,
Alone! I breathe a name, in love,
Unto the star lamp, there above!

Blest be that spot, lost darling mine,
Where trembling rays upon you, shine!
Alone! I whisper in my heart,
We meet, one day, to never part!

Go! Happy star! and find my love
Your rays shall thrill her, from above!
Alone! There's yet one throb divine,
Which quivers from my heart, to thine!

Down the dark mountain sweeps the wind,
And leaves me, lingering here behind,
Alone! Ah! Take these words in fee,
My greeting! Loved and lost! To Thee!

Strong, seated by his table in despondency, was suddenly reminded of the duty of his early departure for San

Francisco, by the arrival of a telegram brought by a special messenger, with orders to obtain an immediate answer.

"They asked me to say to you that the San Francisco parties were anxiously waiting at the office, down there, for your answer."

The counselor's fingers trembled, as he tore open the yellow envelope. Some current of strange fates seemed to drift his varying soul to and fro in wild eddies on this strange night. The telegram was in cipher, and when he had spread it out, as word after word was revealed under the key given him by the bank manager, the blood leaped to his forehead and throbbed wildly in his temples. It read:

"Come back here at once. A full examination of the "Lone Star" title is ordered by our home office. London expert is now here to examine the mine. We name you to examine the title. Secret instructions are waiting. Answer." It was marked, "strictly private and confidential. See Manager alone."

The weapons he had longed for, were now forged ready to his hand! He sprang up.

"Now," growled Waldo Strong, "Mr. Frederick Wyman, I will soon find out where Robert Devereux went to, and, the hidden secret doors of the past shall be all unsealed." His fingers flew in the transcription of his prompt reply, and once again the night winds seemed to wail "Murder!"

CHAPTER XII.

The Turn of the Tide.

Two weeks after the arrival of the Buford ménage in Paris, that splendid chrysopolitan delegation, the Buford family, ornamented the afternoon monthly reception of the charming wife of the American minister. It was almost in the capacity of a declared lover, that the elegant Wyman escorted Miss Minnie Buford. All American Paris thronged the salons, for a happy chance had been afforded the American colony to hear the voice of the caged song bird, whose beauty and rising genius could not be long hidden under the French substitute for a bushel. Madame l'Ambassadrice was the proud mother of a budding daughter, one of the Columbian heiresses to all the arts and graces. It was but a fitting tribute to the sympathetic Californian singer, that the daughter of fortune, with a girl's impetuosity, raved unceasing of the charms of this hidden beauty. And so, after some protest from the Maestro, as Gladys Lyndon was already a semi-professional, the neophyte's exquisite voice and wonderful beauty thrilled and startled the self-classified aristocrats of traveling America.

They were of all grades, from the wild untamed Texas cattle man, the scientific Chicago pig assassinator, the prononcé "bonanza" western sample millionaires, faded politicians, Generals of vast renown in the piping times of peace, inventors, artists, schemers and literary men; a motley crowd who all either had axes to grind, or else had put such an excellent edge thereon that grinding was

with them a thing of the past, and further sharpening would be impossible. The great literati, artists, and club men were conspicuously absent, on other pleasures bent, but the citizens present, were all "prominent in their own communities."

This universal "prominence" is one of the blessed attributes of our deliciously free country, and our remarkably active "personal journalism." Women of all grades dressed "à quatre épingles," exhibited the multiflora of our beloved country. They were assorted in type, but all high in their own esteem; and were charming exemplars of different forms of beauty, and styles of "modern art," for the beauty mill of America grinds out jewels of varied size, luster, sheen and gorgeous tint, suited to the most fastidious (matrimonial) purchaser.

As we are all born "free and equal," it is according to our elastic social laws, that among these dames were those who haughtily claimed their right to be there, those who were bidden, those who were glad to be there, and several who had no especial right to be anywhere, and, hence, ornamented Paris, for, up to a certain protective line of some elasticity, Paris resembles San Francisco, where, as a terse social philosopher remarked, "Everything goes!" One and all, as the assembly dispersed, agreed, by a "large majority," as to the brilliance of the golden future hovering over the fair young singer, who was considered to have cast an improving luster upon the "Eagle Bird."

Keenly watching Mrs. Hammond, and particularly mindful of the basilisk eye of Miss Minnie Buford, Mr. Frederick Wyman did not join the throng surrounding the beautiful Gladys, who with gleaming, happy eyes, stood in a circle of her generous countrywomen, half buried in votive flowers impulsively offered. "I will see her later, alone!" the capitalist promised himself, with a delightful

sense of mastership, which the unprotected girl could not escape. But, his brow grew as black as night when he observed his secret foe Jack Otis, bending over the girl's hand in a respectful salute.

There is no shade of human expression which can escape the cold, keen eye of jealousy. Wyman on the watch caught at once the tender flash of Gladys' happy eyes. There was no repression, no deceit in them. In her hour of triumph, the girl's lofty soul shone out from the Gates Ajar, to signal to the one whose mute sympathy had thrilled her in all that glittering throng of the happy children of Mammon, for she had sung to him, alone!

"Damn it! I'll put a spoke out of that fellow's wheel," was Wyman's rough mental soliloquy, and that one happy glance burned in his resentful soul. To his horror, however, on turning, after some routine attentions to the imperious one, whose banner already waved over him, Mrs. Buford herself was the most prominent and energetic of all Miss Lyndon's worshipers. The queen of Nob Hill proposed to "stagger all Paris," with some little festivities of her own later, and her own royal voice, not to be gainsaid, had decreed that this occidental star of music should shine thereat. A new menace to Wyman's schemes!

"I will not take 'No,' for an answer. You must promise me now, Miss Lyndon. You are our own representative, you know," and as Wyman slightly bowed, in passing, he heard a delicate reference, "carte blanche as to terms, you know. In London, in our set, you would surely make the sensation of next season," and now, he would be under a double fire.

Frederick Wyman groaned in rage as he moved on down the great staircase, but, Vanity Fair's parade was around him. He smiled and suffered. He muttered, "I must stop this thing at once," for it suddenly dawned upon

his practical mind that, muzzled by the sharp-eyed heiress, he could not so easily dominate Gladys Lyndon's future. "She may get away from me," he reflected, "with her chances of final success, and, that face! Some fool of a manager, some rich idiot of a romantic turn, may bear her away or, even marry her. And this damned fellow, Otis, too, seems to be really making up to her. I wonder if he has got any money," for, Wyman regarded money the key to every woman's heart! He was moody and thoughtful as he drove away to the Grand Hotel.

The Bufords were about to take a splendid house, leaping quickly into that sudden air of permanence which ready gold can so gracefully arrange in Paris. A short, brilliant campaign there, a later one on far grander lines in London. Such was the programme of this millionaire feminine Alexander, who would thus conquer all the worlds she cared to shine in.

"It would be devilish awkward to have this girl, Lyndon, as a sort of a show-fairy princess, knocking around near us, all the while." Even in his "blissful ignorance," as regarded the "adaptable" and adroit Milly Hammond, he feared the baleful influence of General Hiram Buford,—"on general principles." "It is a fatal mistake to mix up love and business," gloomily soliloquized the discontented Wyman, "and old Buford is no man to be trusted near where a woman is concerned." In his preoccupation, Wyman forgot to extend this verdict to his conduct, in all other sublunary matters. "If I could only plant her in Italy, somewhere out of the way," he dreamed, and as the carriage drove into the court of the great caravansera, a suddenly formed plan was evolved which he proceeded to elaborate over several cocktails at the American bar.

The blood was bounding in his veins with rage and jealousy, when he returned to dress for dinner, as an opera

outing with the ladies, awaited him. The calm, passionless face of Otis had taken on that glow of transparent shining love and pride which lights up the face of a man, thrilled with the one passion of his life. It haunted and enraged Wyman! "I'll go around there night, for half an hour, before the opera," angrily cried Wyman. "I must bring her under my hand," he growled. He was in a mental tumult, as a steward begged him to go at once back to the bureau of the hotel.

"This cablegram for Monsieur, to be repeated delivery has just arrived. I have the honor," and, the beautiful young Chef de Bureau looked over Wyman's shoulder and ogled a pair of dashing American girls, whose prettiness and "previousness" was the talk of the hotel. They had already distanced Daisy Miller, by several laps in the circuit of life's race, and were both well in hand, with "lots of speed" left! Monsieur Bernard de Vaubec, (the aforesaid picturesque clerk, who posed as a reduced Marquis), for the first time in his existence, heard a veritable Comstock cyclone of energetic, every-day cursing. He started in unfeigned alarm, for Mr. Frederick Wyman had read the dispatch handed him, with eyes whose malignant fire fairly made the elegant official writhe.

"Send a man out with me to the nearest cable office. A coupé, quick." Wyman was livid!

The very solid earth seemed to swing round under the speculator's feet, as he read the dispatch signed "Brown Wilder." Its very words seemed traced in living fire. They were the first danger of ten long successful years. They were as follows:

"Expert accepts mine, but the bank's counsel reject your title. Advertisements are out, in all the papers, calling for Robert Devereux or his heirs. Come home at once. Utmost importance. Standing of mine on Exchange abso-

lutely ruined until you come back. Work all going on well. Answer, giving your date of sailing. Send instructions. Telegraph to our bank. BROWN-WILDER."

It was only when Wyman had delivered and paid for his long reply that the blood returned in definite waves to his brain. To consult the sailing tables, to decide instantly upon departure, was only the work of five minutes.

"I think they will easily understand that," he grimly said, as he looked at a copy he had made of his brief message. It read:

"Sail to-morrow, Havre, La Bretagne. Come right on through. Mail and telegrams, Hoffman House, New York. Deny all reports. Infamous blackmail lie. Have telegraphed to the bank. WYMAN."

His cablegram to the Anglo-Californian bank was a guarantee of his title by an offer to deposit, in escrow, nine-tenths of the whole stock of the "Lone Star" against half of the purchase price, and announced his immediate return.

"I have to work quickly," he decided, as he sprang from the carriage in the Grand Hotel courtyard. Already, his facile mind was at work. "The General, Mrs. Hammond, Gladys, the tall, perfect blonde, whose day of triumph had also brought to him this black storm cloud. His eye rested on the clock as he called a halt and marshalled his mental forces. "Let me see," he mused, "half-past five! I can first see Mrs. Buford and Minnie. I dare not tell old Hiram this, it would ruin all now. I must have his influence and backing. I will not be bothered any more with Milly Hammond. I will satisfy her, and then leave her to work her way homeward alone."

At that very moment, the graceful chameleon of love was gently working her way homeward to the Grand Hotel, which trip involved two carriages, one for a drive of circumlocution, with the sighing General, who was to

arrive later, and the other, to bring her back, alone, from her "shopping."

"There is no time like the present," quickly concluded Wyman. His libations gave him a strange recklessness. "Mrs. Buford once on my side, and Minnie's word passed, then, the General cannot very well recede, for I will spread the news of the engagement as I go along! The family cannot weaken. The "American Register" shall have it at once, so he is tied to my interest. I'll do it!"

Satisfying himself that General Buford was really out, the graceful adventurer, with a well-acted deference, with a touching trust in Mrs. Buford's already established friendship, in a few earnest sentences told her of a sudden necessity for his secret departure for San Francisco. "My general interests are so large," he modestly said, "that I do not dare trust any one man with my power of attorney. I am so far alone in the world," he smiled. "I will not feel that I am alone, if you will allow me to tell your daughter what I am sure her own heart has already whispered. My affairs will demand my writing nearly all to-night. My man is already packing up my luggage, and the opera, I fear, must await my return." He smiled. He had trusted the outpourings of his heart first to the flattered matron. "Now," the handsome miner concluded, "my whole future, Madam, rests upon your kindness, and I feel sure that you, my dear Mrs. Buford, have felt for some weeks that I would soon come to you on this happy matter. It is my whole life!"

Gently beguiled by Wyman's easy flattery, and the pleading of his submissive eyes, Mrs. Buford, startled, yet pleased at heart, arose, and with kindly eyes, wished him good fortune. "Trust to me," she graciously said, as Wyman respectfully kissed her hand.

When the portiere of the splendid salon was swung

aside at last, the piercing but coyly-expectant glances of Minnie Buford bade him hope for the best. Those glittering eyes, sentinels of her watchful soul, told him that all was well. The queen of Nob Hill had softened the sudden disclosure. No deceit hovered in his impassioned words as he plead with the heiress, for Wyman felt now that this ambitious marriage would be the long-needed sheet-anchor of his stormy life. Society rank took on a new value! "Hiram is a tower of strength," he thought. General Buford's very influence in London, in California society, with the courts, at the very bank, the Anglo-Californian, where this little "hitch" was now so awkward, this all-commanding influence was his only present salvation! His impassioned, pent-up feelings pointed the glowing eloquence of his earnest words. He swept Minnie Buford's heart away. He was no laggard lover, and in his tender vehemence, he once only forgot his own cardinal rule, "not to mix up love and business."

But, the fates favored him. Minnie Buford, pale and anaemic, really felt the reaction of his ardent, striving, virile nature, and she gasped and murmured, "Well, he's no fool anyway, a man who will make his mark in the world," as the happy Wyman descended the stair to waylay General Hiram, and break the thing to him gently, for, she had whispered "yes" to his prayer!

"It's all right, mamma. Fred and I, understand each other perfectly," the really satisfied girl whispered in her awakened excitement of nature, as she twined herself around her mother's neck. Wyman was a strong, dashing wooer, and she fondly fancied he was "all heart." In which, the acute Miss Buford reckoned without her host, for, like many others viewing the "practical business man," she mistook low cunning for ability, unscrupulous greed and untiring trickery for enterprise, sentimental varnish for

honest emotions, and because the man was alert, practical and active in his own interest, invested him with all the attributes of superior, manly character taken upon trust!

Alas! the petted heiress was not the only woman at home or abroad destined to be coldly traded upon in Hymen's courts, and to be grossly deceived in her own untrammeled choice of a husband, "either for use or ornament." Life's eternal lottery!

"I hope now, that papa will not interpose any foolish objections," mused Minnie, as she watched for the returning carriage of her usually indulgent father. "He never has so far denied me anything, it is true," she ruminated, "and I presume this will be all right." She had been drawn bodily under the spell of Wyman's exuberant vitality and attractive manners. He had well been taught to please.

It was all right, for General Hiram Buford was in a golden good humor this very evening. He was also a little startled with the suddenness of Wyman's "little run home," as he expressed it. But, he had most cordially received the half disclosure, and said genially to his expectant son-in-law, "I'll give you confidential letters to all our own people, and they will take you in to the inside ring, at once." So, the golden circle opened at the touch of the lucky rascal!

"There goes a man to be proud of. A true, self-made American," dilated Buford, as he engulfed two extra cocktails, as a solemn libation beyond his allowance.

Mr. Wyman added one more to his unusual stimulus of the excited afternoon. It was his lucky day, and the devil whispered to him to "rush things." He slipped away, and in half an hour a neat private announcement to the "American Register" was mailed, which contained the cheering news that "A matrimonial alliance had been

arranged between Miss Minerva Buford, the only daughter of General Hiram Buford, the great San Francisco capitalist, and Mr. Frederick Wyman, the young Nevada millionaire whose brilliant management of the 'Lone Star' mine, had proved him one of the ablest of the Comstock mining kings. The nuptials, in the early autumn, would be followed by a series of magnificent entertainments in honor of the happy pair, at General Buford's Paris and London mansions, etc., etc."

"Now, that will pin the family down beyond any possible withdrawal," said Mr. Wyman, as he concluded a careful toilet for a first "dinner en famille," in the capacity of accepted lover.

He was still thrilling with the unexpected attack in the West. "I must slip away for an hour, and give at most ten minutes to Milly Hammond, then, I will see Miss Gladys!" His face grew black with an ugly passing scowl, for the happy light in her eyes recalled the dangerous Jack Otis, in his self-betrayal. "By God! He shall never have her. She is mine," Wyman exulted. His blood was pulsing with the pride of his dashing success. "I will separate them forever," growled Wyman, as he settled his tie and went down to lie to the young girl, whom he loved "on strictly business principles," for, all a lover's light gleamed in his eyes as he bent over Miss Minnie.

When his hour's grace was accorded, the lover arranged to meet the partie de famille at nine o'clock, and, at ten, General Buford and himself would conclude a last glimpse at the "standing orders" for the vast enterprise of the "Lone Star" deal.

"Thank God, Buford will never know that I have forced this engagement on," mused Wyman, as he rapidly arranged in his mind the details of his interview with Mrs. Milly Hammond. "I have a little panacea for all

her woes," he smiled, for he had taken with him, his pocket check-book. "And after all, it's the only happy way to part in such an intrigue, quickly, with no warning. She will take care of herself and go back happily, alone." In which, Frederick Wyman, Esq., also was a poor prophet, for it was written in the book of Fate that the "kind-hearted" General Buford should "take care" of Mrs. Hammond, in many bright future days to come, and that she should return "to her home" in San Francisco, nestling tenderly "under the shadow of his wing," but, at a most discreet distance from that energetic Juno, Mrs. Pauline Buford. Cupid's little tricks still lead lovers' feet as far astray as of old!

"Milly, you are a bright and manageable darling. The only one reasonable woman I know," murmured Wyman, as in his heart he counted the moments after he had deftly "broken the ice," and, arranged Mrs. Hammond's affairs! She bore up well, singularly well, and smiled and sighed. But, the happy woman insisted on "breaking the ice" also of a couple of bottles of champagne frappé, before she would release her departing swain. He had played right into her hand. The cards of life seemed to be all running her way, and in her glee at the surety of a quiet sojourn with none to now hamper her little "comedie à deux" with Hiram Buford, she was expansive, tenderly touching and loving, loth to see Wyman go, for he had touched the lost chord, with his check.

"Listen!" he said with a serious air. "My sudden departure must not in any way hasten your return. Stay here. Get up your new wardrobe leisurely, and write me twice a week to my home address. Tell me all of Gladys Lyndon's new triumphs, and if I wish any little confidential matters attended to here, I will write or cable."

"You are so good, Fred," cried Milly. "Do you know

I wish to see a little of London before I go home, especially as Mrs. Buford has now grown quite civil to me." This little transformation act had been artfully worked by good General Buford, who desired to "confer with Mrs. Hammond from time to time," during the winter.

"Well, you will have a pleasant London season then," slowly rejoined Wyman. "They will entertain handsomely, and both the ladies are to be presented." Wyman was studying the future effect upon Mrs. Hammond of the coming news of his engagement, as he said "good-bye" in a manner which called up the conservatory on Van Ness avenue. "Ah! She is too game a woman to ever annoy me," he decided, as he sadly unwound the white arms of this Briseis, and hastened away to the pension where Miss Gladys Lyndon lived "sélon les régles."

It verged on being late and he hastened the fiacre driver unduly. The warm rooms, the insidious gas-charged wines, with his unwonted oratorical excitement and the many confirmatory cocktails with General Buford, aided a revulsion of his nerves, for the strong drink of the afternoon now smote madly upon his brain. His resentment against the unknown assailants of his interests in San Francisco, his dull, burning hatred of the unasserted superiority of Mr. Jack Otis returned, and he was in a recklessly bitter mood when the polite servant informed him that "Miss Lyndon begged to be excused."

In his stubborn purpose, quivering under the hammers of the alcohol beating upon his brain, with an unsteady hand he scrawled upon his card "Must see you to-night; leave for California in the morning; important to you."

Some evil genius surely hovered over the pathway of "Nature's nobleman" that night! It was the first time that he had ventured to force himself on the vestal retirement of the girl who now stood before him, wondering at

his flushed face and hostile eye. It was the turning of the tide, a crisis, and, he was not sober. Unaccustomed to the signs of social dissipation, the budding prima donna was secretly alarmed. Never before had she felt her helplessness so keenly. Unused to the reckless ways of the insidious world around her she was not skillful enough to prevent a tête-à-tête by bringing a dame de compagnie, as garde d'honneur. She recoiled slightly in terror as he swayed toward her with unsteady feet. This action of simple surprise maddened him.

"You haven't a word for me, I suppose?" he roughly broke out. "Now, if it was that loafer, Otis!"

The splendid woman flashed her eyes upon him! He paused for a moment, for, it was a frozen Niobe that stood there scornfully regarding him. Her heart had ceased beating with a gasp at the violence of the direct insult. Nature broke down the wall of her ignorance, and she loathed his leering, handsome face. She essayed to pass him, but his keen intelligence now told him that he had lost forever the game of a life. Her conquest was now impossible. He seized her by the wrist.

"None of your tragedy queen airs with me, my pauper beauty. I'm not fool enough to set a jewel for others to wear. I'll stop your letter of credit, and then, your face will be your fortune," he raved. But, as he looked around uneasily to see where the whip-lash voice came from, the excited libertine felt that he was alone. Flying footsteps sounding on the stair, the rustling of a robe, above echoed for the last time on his ears, in which rang still her one indignant cry: "Coward!"

It was all over, forever! Wyman struggled stupidly out of the house, and passing, all unnoticed, the surprised servant who heard the loud sounds of a railing voice, he passed on into the cool night air which partly sobered

him. "I will ruin her. I will drive her out of Paris!" he viciously swore. "All that I have to do, is to give Milly Hammond a hint to drop a word in general society, here and there, as to how this prude came over here." He laughed brutally. "Then she can play her little game of life, lone-handed."

It was only with a supreme effort of will that he controlled himself by the thought of the final conference with General Buford, for he felt he had faced a miserable Waterloo. The driver, taken into counsel, suggested a brief visit to a neighboring restaurant café. A few moments in care of the head waiter, a snuffing up of a few whiffs of absinthe, and the cooling draughts of some artfully prepared lemon juice and iced seltzer with some decorative attentions, prepared him to trundle slowly down to the Grand Hotel.

He but dimly realized the disaster of his intrusion upon Miss Lyndon. The plea of weariness sufficed to blind General Buford, who promptly agreed to forward all needed papers by the next mail.

"Nothing is wrong with you in California, my dear boy?" that sturdy old millionaire queried.

"Not a thing. I must go home and watch some business a little. Only some of my outside investments. All is straight as a string," replied Wyman, but Gladys Lyndon's scornful eyes followed his unsteady step. The word "coward" rang on his ears. "Ah! Wait, wait," he hissed.

In the solitude of his room, he threw himself with aching head upon his couch. Still rang in his ears that word, "coward," and, gloomy sprites watched over the tossing sleep of the bridegroom to be. "I was a fool to go at her so roughly," he babbled. "It's too late now," and he fell away into a wild melody of dreams. He was still wrestling with the

grim demons of the night when his provisional valet roused him by "shaking him thoroughly."

"Six o'clock, sir. You've been going on and crying out loudly, and I have been watching you an hour," the frightened man cried, for among the phantoms called up by the "unloosening process" of his sharp indulgence in drink, the pale shades of Robert Devereux and Steve Berard had recalled a name forgotten for years, "The Mariquita." The defeated libertine, shuddered and growled, "What devil has emptied their graves? My sleeping partners!"

"Get me in good shape at once. Ring up some breakfast," ordered Wyman, who also applied "the hair of the same dog," with more or less satisfactory effects.

"You told me to remind you about my orders for Morani in London, moreover, a ring you spoke of, besides," the valet proceeded. His past experience in "high life" made him au fait in the "Grande Lever" of a fashionable man. And, the word "coward" was buzzing still in Wyman's ears as the insulted orphan's legacy of shame.

When Wyman was ready for the business of the early morning, he surveyed himself in the glass with a severely condemnatory glance. Gazing moodily out of the window in the dispiriting sloppy hour of the early morning, he vigorously exclaimed, "I made a damned fool of myself last night!" which verdict was applicable to the severance of his present relations with the child of song and, also, to the colossal folly of forcing his way against her will into the pension, at so late an hour. "That jig is up," he moodily cried, "but, I will break her heart and drive her out of Paris."

His few remaining hours were devoted to a studied adieu to the girl whose promised hand was now his only

safeguard, and to her mother. This haughty lady was delighted at Wyman's private commission to purchase, and transmit at once to her daughter, a diamond engagement ring, which would have been colossal if quality did not temper its luck, for the check entrusted to Mrs. Buford was indicative of royal tastes. "I will have Minnie, at any rate, sure and fast," he swore. A happy thought was the provision for a daily offering of magnificent flowers. The arrangements for cabling and mail transmission also were imparted, as a trust of love, to Mrs. Buford. The capitalist could hardly endure the half hour passed in bright dreams of the coming time with the girl who seemed to have stepped up on a pedestal of authoritative dignity over night.

In a mad desire to embark, before the news of the untoward stoppage of the "Lone Star" negotiation could reach Buford, Wyman threw himself into a studied play which exhausted every fibre, and as he turned and saw her fluttering handkerchief, a good-bye, love's last signal, he heard a ringing voice cry again, "Coward!"

"Thank God! I've seen the last of them, for some time at least!" growled Wyman, as he settled himself in the Havre train. "I can fix up Morani's orders and get rid of this fellow. Then, for a good rest at sea and vengeance on these blackmailing scoundrels at San Francisco. May the fiends hold off till I reach home; then war to the knife." With a bitter malignity, he had mailed a curt note to the Paris bankers, stopping the balance of Miss Lyndon's credit, and had cabled the New York bankers to the same effect. "Let this pearl of virtue now try the shady side of the street," he sneered, "I have done with her!"

As "La Bretagne" drew out of the harbor, he hurled an imprecation in the direction of the supposed locality of Miss Gladys Lyndon, and his hearty objurgation particu-

larly included Mr. Jack Otis. "Milly Hammond will drop a bit of acid here and there, which will eat a hole or two in "My Lady's spotless robe," he viciously laughed. "I think I can see the pauper as she gets the news of that money stoppage."

But, with all the power to punish and to follow the friendless girl, whose innocence had persistently foiled his insinuating insults, Mr. Frederick Wyman, the epitome of Nature's noblemen, started in sudden alarm more than once on the steamer's deck, for the word "coward" seemed still to hiss in his ears, in the swish of the salt sea waves and the hoarse whisper of the unfriendly winds. "There is some turn of the tide in this," he finally decided. "I was always lucky with women, and I always found them alike, all easy to handle before!"

Nemesis was shadowing him!

Waldo Strong, counselor-at-law, chafed inwardly as he was swiftly borne away from the town of Truckee on his return voyage to San Francisco, to answer the imperative call of his most influential clientele, the directors of the Anglo-Californian bank. In the half hour allotted for a hasty meal, at the boundary line town, he engaged the landlord of the hotel in conversation. A cigar and a proffered cocktail sufficed to loosen the reminiscent frontier Boniface's memory.

Waldo Strong had a neat little pocket note-book, full of notes in a certain secret system of private notation, which was the triumph of hours of leisure. The notary's name, the man of many functions, occupied a place therein. He had found it, on the main deed of the "Mariquita mine." It was in consonance with that useful citizen's varied functions and many occupations, that he was now absent upon a grizzly bear hunt, for time hung heavy on the hands of the forest-girdled citizens of Truckee.

"You see, squire," said the landlord, "the boys get sort of tired of laying around here, and drinking whisky and playing California Jack. They do punish a power of whisky, and, they won't work. So they have their little hunting and fishing trips. He's the very same man. Been Notary Public here goin' on fifteen years. He writes a splendid hand, when he ain't drunk," the cautious hotel keeper said, hedging a bit.

"Well, I'll run up and see you some time. I'm a fisherman myself," pleasantly rejoined the counselor, as he sought the train. "I'll call up some of his old friends, perhaps." And, as the train swung along over the Sierras, the lawyer's brain was busied in algebraic exhaustions of every possible solution of the puzzling case. "These fellows had some motive in their long association," he ruminated. "It all hinges upon Robert Devereux!"

In furtherance of his little private scheme, he indited a neat advertisement, which ornamented, for several weeks, the principal journals of California and Nevada. It was attractive in its appearance. It promised to some stranger a share of fortune's favors:

> WANTED—INFORMATION OF THE DEATH OF Robert Devereux, who left Virginia City, Nevada, in 1864. His legal heirs will hear of something greatly to their advantage, by addressing X. Y. Z., Lock Box, 2901, San Francisco, Cal.
> A liberal reward for the information desired.

"That will do the business," confidently murmured Strong. "Somebody always turns up, if there is any property to be handed over. I think I will obtain photographs of Messrs. Hooper, Bowen, and Mr. Frederick Wyman. The notary may have been sober enough to remember this affair." And, Strong was impressed with the mysterious current of fate which seemed to float the "Lone Star" property, the source of his ruin, back to him, on a refluent eddy of professional work.

With no waste of time, after a brief visit to his office, he proceeded to hunt up the associate manager of the bank, whom he found at his club. Suspecting the presence of the expert, in a man of Anglican outward seeming, Strong merely passed on into the card room, with a nod. In a few moments, the manager joined him.

"That's the very man you have to avoid. I do not want him to know of your present employment. Slip out and go over to your office. I will have some friends tell him 'bear and Indian' stories, with a few 'lynchings and murders' thrown in, till we have a quiet hour." This feat was successfully performed, to the horror of the scientist!

In the security of Strong's office, the banker at ease, with cigar, and stowed away in Strong's best leather chair, relieved his mind.

"It flashed over me when this thing came to us, that we might easily recoup some of those Hooper losses here. We have been censured, as usual, from the home office. They never do censure us if we make an extra two per cent. annual dividend, but, I am tired of hearing of Hooper, Hooper, Hooper. Now, I give you a free hand. I'll have all the papers and detail work carried on by our usual counsel. In this thing, I give you carte blanche and full power. It would be a personal satisfaction to me, to stop off this fellow Wyman here, for, I think he has used, and then screened, Hooper; probably, Bowen and himself are feeding Hooper along with money and intelligence now. I wonder where he fled to. If we could only compromise with him!

"Where's Wyman?" shortly asked Strong.

"Oh! he's still in Paris, and by the way, Du Barry of the French bank tells me he is flourishing around there with Mrs. Hammond, you know," and the two men smiled gently, an easy smile to understand. The way of the world; always the same!

Counselor Strong's face was as merciless as that of a duelist à la barriere, when he said:

"Post your expert to take it easy here a month. Send him around to all the show places, the Almaden, and all around the State. I want to have just a week to go back to Virginia with the new light of these papers, and their own showing. Let your counsel come over here and see me. He might blunder in and meet me. If Wyman knew that I was in this matter, he would build up new forts inside of his present lines. I'll catch him for you, and perhaps get hold of Hooper, too. I'll not spare your money, don't you fear. I'll send for you, or come into your private bank office when I wish to see you. We must be strangers on this business, and let no one in the bank know. We will trap Mr. Frederick Wyman yet, I swear it."

"All right, counselor, trap the scoundrels, and I'll add a private fee, to the professional one. By the way, lay it on well. The Wyman syndicate will pay all preliminaries; so, your enemy furnishes the sauce for his own roasting.'

Waldo Strong smiled a grim smile, as he dismissed the banker at the door. With the energy of desperation, he toiled night after night at the papers until he had mastered Mr. Wyman's London scheme in every detail. He sprang up in precipitation as his friend, Inspector Stanton, noisily rapped at his office door a week after his return. It was during one of the night seances, for his daily office practice was increasing. The tide had turned his way. His nerves were in a state of strange thrill, which recalled the night when the winds had whispered "murder" to him, there alone on the Comstock, with the lone star hanging above him, and the Mariquita mine stretched out there below. He was now awaiting the coming days when he might receive an answering cablegram from Paris,

for a busy fiend whispered in his heart that Gladys Lyndon was in Paris, in the toils of Mrs. Milly Hammond, and Wyman, his enemy, was in Paris, too. "What would she not do for money?" the agonized suitor thought, as he remembered the society woman's record, and he cursed the day when he had allowed the pure-browed girl to be swept out of his life without warning her.

"She might have shared my misfortunes. She might have waited for these brighter days," he mourned in his sorrow, and then, too late, he remembered that he had not trusted her womanhood far enough, to ask her to be his wife, to make his heart known. "Have I, like the base Judean, thrown a pearl away?" he groaned. It was almost hopeless, but, to a visiting legal friend he had indited this commission of the heart. "If she is in Paris, Eldridge will surely find it out and cable," he reflected, as he bent his brows over the paper. "The tide has turned my way now. I may win her yet," he thought, and it was the hope of offering her a new fortune and his life, that he sternly toiled away.

Stanton laughed as he received the chilly welcome of the busied lawyer. "Come now, Waldo," he goodhumoredly said, "Give me ten minutes, and you'll not regret it. I come to do you a favor." Strong's brow cleared, and he swept the papers all into a drawer.

"All right," he cried, offering the officer an open box of cigars.

"By the by," smiled Stanton, "what does that mean?" handing the astonished lawyer the Devereux advertisement.

"How did you come to know I was behind this?" cried the mystified lawyer.

"For this, are we inspectors," laughed Stanton. "Well, hand over your money, for, I saw this Mr. Robert Dever-

eux murdered, myself." Strong bounded up from his chair. His hand gripped Stanton's sinewy arm.

"You! you!" he gasped. "Where? When? Tell me all." And, awed by Strong's excited state of mind, the inspector lit a cigar, and simply narrated the scene at the Cross Roads, where the Mormon rancher, Holman, saw the last gasp of the owner of the Mariquita, weltering in his blood on the bar-room floor. Strong's hands covered his face, and his frame shook with strong emotion.

Without raising his head, the lawyer asked question after question. The description of the dead man, the scene, all the details, the fate of the slayer, and even the ghastly surroundings of the unavenged crime. "Did you ever hear of what became of the man who murdered him?" finally asked the lawyer.

"Oh! yes, I went up every three months then, till Nevada became a State. This man, a notorious gambler, was shot by the '101,' Committee of Regulators, in the clearing out of the roughs. Strange to say, he left a good deal of unclaimed property."

"And Devereux, the murdered man, what of his friends, his body?" said Strong, quivering now with excitement. Stanton consulted an old pocket note-book.

"I was told by the station keeper at the Cross Roads that his widow in San Francisco wrote some very touching letters, and spoke of his little fatherless girl. All these letters were later turned over to Holman, the Mormon bishop, who was the magistrate there. He went off to Salt Lake later, and he's now dead. I was ordered to investigate the fate of Devereux's letters, and all the mail sent to Virginia City, and I even wrote on to Bishop Holman, for so he bloomed out at Salt Lake later. He was only Elder Holman then. He wrote me very civilly, that he had turned all over to his successor as justice of the peace. I

find I wrote also to him. He died suddenly, shot also in a drunken row. All the archives and things were lost." The lawyer sighed as he finished the notes he had made, for now, he was keenly at work. His open memorandum book lay beside him.

"And, you say it was in the spring of 1865 when this man was murdered?" mechanically repeated Strong, following his own notes.

"I did not!" energetically answered Inspector Stanton. "I said the spring of 1864," he replied, turning over his notes. "I did not go up there after 1864, when the State was admitted. I have all the notes and dates here. I am surely correct."

"Give me that book! Let me see it!" shouted Strong, as he eagerly grasped the old memorandum book. Stanton gazed kindly at his friend.

"Waldo, you are really killing yourself with overwork. This thing has got to stop."

"Tell me all that over again. Briefly, only what you can prove and swear to," solemnly said the lawyer. "I will explain later." When Stanton had finished, Strong gazed earnestly in his eyes. "Are there any men up there now who saw that murder?" Strong demanded. "I only want the time fixed."

"Oh yes! I passed through this year. The store-keeper is still there, and his old clerk is his partner now. The bar-keeper, too, has a store of his own. I talked with all of them, for I pitied the poor widow, who, by the way, I learned from the records of the Postoffice, is now dead. Her official letters from us were returned from the City and County Hospital marked 'Dead.'" Strong's eyes were filled with tears.

"And, the girl?"

"'Sent to some asylum. Could not be found later.' That was the carrier's report."

"I shall not leave you then, Stanton!" cried Strong, "not lose you from my sight, till I have your deposition, and I'll go up to Willows and see those men."

"Why so?" eagerly demanded Stanton, who saw Strong quivering with an unwonted thrill of mental repression.

"Because!" cried Strong, as he sprang up and smote the desk a mighty blow with his fist, "that scoundrel and murderer Wyman recorded a deed of Devereux's priceless mine, the 'Mariquita,' made *six months after he was cold and under the sod.* The stolen mine has made him a millionaire, and, that wandering orphan girl (if alive) is '*Miss Devereux of the Marquita*' and *a millionairess.* He is an arch villain."

"By God! you astound me!" eagerly shouted Stanton, catching the excitement of the dark mystery; but who signed the forged deed?"

"That is what I am going to find out," cried Waldo Strong, as he wiped the beads of moisture from his brow. "I know who recorded it," he grimly cried, and, before the two men sought their pillows a new light had dawned upon the "deep damnation of the taking off" of the invalid of Holman's Ranch. Robert Devereux had clearly been trapped to his death, and killed for the mine!

On his way home, Waldo Strong paused before the huge black mass of the old Cathedral church whose deep-toned bell boomed out "two," on the chilly air. He saw again the four crosses, glimmering sharp cut, against the sky. "'Vengeance is mine. I will repay,' saith the Lord," he gravely said as he bared his head, and added: "God help you, Frederick Wyman, your time has come!"

On the morning of Mr. Wyman's flitting from Paris, Gladys Lyndon was awake long ere that time when "the casement slowly grows a glimmering square." Her pillows were wet with the bitter tears of dependence, and a woman's keenest sorrows, for the mask thus off at last, the silver

veil was lifted. The "generosity" of Wyman stood revealed in its hideously loathsome light! She knew, at last, the galling chain which binds debt and its humiliations. She felt the meshes of her dark net closing around her.

As the cold, gray morning lit up the weary surroundings, the first hours of her awakening were bitter indeed. Seated in her cheerless room, gazing into the fireless grate, she saw the ashes of her life, the death of her fondest hopes in the blackened embers there. All the gross familiarities of Wyman's later visits burned in her heart as a hideous memory. The beautiful pure brows were drawn into the sad lines of the sorrows which rend, but her young life bounded indignantly in the pulsing veins of womanly pride. She thought over the consequences of the night's occurrence. "I can never see him again," she murmured, and her white hands were clenched in her flowing golden hair, as she paced the room in her lonely grief. Her eyes rested on the river, cold and menacing in its muddy flow between rock-built walls. "Better that, better the oblivion of Pére la Chaise, than life under the domination of this vile brute." And, a strange uncanny feeling crept into her heart in thinking of the flowery path along which Milly Hammond had so gently guided her. "False too! His tool! His instrument! No!" she warmly cried. "No woman's heart could be flinty enough to trap an orphaned girl to shame. But away, away! I must leave Paris. And how?"

She knew she dared not unfold the truth which shames to Mrs. Hammond, the pet of fortune, a butterfly of a golden life which she had only gazed at in its glow on the occasion of her musical appearance. "I dare not trust her; I will not tell her," she cried.

"Alone! My God! How sadly alone! No one to advise, no one to help." And, as she saw her own tell-tale face in the mirror, she turned away, for blushes there told of a

glowing life hidden there in her chilly bosom. "Otis!" His words of pride and tender cheering encomium, returned. "If he were only my brother." And yet, bowed in her sorrows those very blushes told her she would not have it so! When her morning coffee was finished, one practical thought filled her mind. "This Mrs. Buford is a millionairess—a representative California lady. She will soon open her house in London. I must leave here. The bread I would owe to him," she dared not speak the name, "would be daily poison. I will leave here at once, quietly. I will see this great lady. She may help me to obtain some pupils in London. I might even sing in parlors."

And yet, in the silence of the room where her loveliness and loneliness reigned as twin queens, she felt the slender reed on which she leaned now bend beneath her. She dropped her tired head upon her relaxed arms as she thought with horror of the two thousand dollars she had already drawn of the letter of credit, for the thrifty rules of the Parisian "musical institution" had demanded six months in advance. A few hundred dollars of this borrowed money remained yet in her possession. "Ah! My God! How shall I lift this debt? The badge of shame, for he—he—may say—." And then, there was no sound in the lonely room but the sobs which marked the agony of her bright brave heart, now humbled to the very earth. And the stricken woman prayed to the God of the orphan!

As the hours dragged on, Gladys Lyndon sat awaiting the time when she could approach the Californian millionairess. Her senses were benumbed. Already, she had experienced many varied ingenious assaults upon her privacy by the light-hearted Gallic flaneurs of the streets. In vain, the plainest dress and severest mien, shadowed her sparkling beauty. She was too fatally brilliant for the

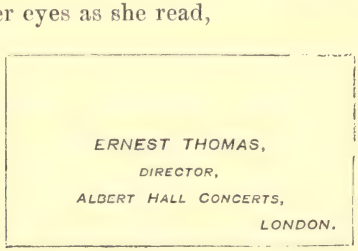
repose of womanly plainness, and the hunter had brought her to bay at last in her own home. "Are they all the same?" she wearily guessed, as she mechanically received the letters held out by the wondering servant.

There was one which spurred her to instant action. It was a curt note from the banker, announcing that any further drafts on letter of credit No. 1086 of their New York house would be dishonored. "He is an exact and prompt business man!" the girl exclaimed, and her soul rose in the mad revolt of an outraged womanhood. The letter fell at her feet, and her eyes followed listlessly the lines of the next, but it brought back white-winged hope to the sealed portals of her dark heart. It was a pleasant request from Mrs. Pauline Buford, to call at once at her residence, at two o'clock. "I wish you to sing at my first reception, and so, pray do not disappoint me."

"I will tell her of my needs. I will throw myself on her mother heart. She, at least, is not a fashionable automaton! She has a child. There must be some womanly blood in her veins. She is above all meanness."

The dreaming girl sat arranging her plans for the proper explanation of her changed plans. Too well she knew that all a woman's movements, (when unprotected), have a peculiar interest, for the casual and most critical observer. A knock at her door was the precursor to a card.

"The gentleman is awaiting you in the parlor, mademoiselle," was the servant's announcement, and wonderment filled her eyes as she read,



"A stranger for me, on business!" Her heart was beating wildly, as she entered the salon below, and her spirits were lightened as a bright, bustling, cheery man of middle age possessed himself of her two hands.

"You don't know me, I am sure you do not; but I hope you will know me very soon, my dear young lady!" cried the English impresario. "I will be brief, for I am a man of business, and always, come directly to my point. I came on to Paris for a soloist. I have been most grievously disappointed in one or two persons, whose voices I heard last year. Now, Mario tells me that you are the only one he knows who has had any previous experience. He has promised me to speak to you after your lesson of to-day. I am in an awful hole. Help me, I beg of you. When our four months' season is over, you could return. What do you say to the idea? You'll like London."

The breathless impressario paused, as Gladys Lyndon sank into a chair, overcome with her excitement. Here was a possible avenue of escape! Fate seemed to open a door; but, the girl had no time to reflect. The busy man bent his bushy brows, and with gleaming, kindly eyes said, "I'll be very frank with you. Walsingham of our Embassy heard you sing at the American minister's yesterday. Nature made him a musician! Ah! an untoward fate dooms him to a future peerage, and a huge fortune. An artist spoiled! I am acting entirely on his dictum;" and as Thomas danced about her genially, he exclaimed, "You have the classic personality for high grade concerts! Bless you! It's a great career!" and, Gladys timidly interrupted a catalogue of all the royalties and nobility who were patrons of these same high grade festivals of song. "Nothing better in Britain; Her Majesty has graciously—" and here, he dropped down to business. With a keen twinkle in his eye, he cried, "What do you say now to fifty

guineas a week and expenses? Two concerts; two songs and one encore! It leaves you perfectly free for private house singing, only nothing in public, at any admittance fee affair. Of course, your expenses to London and all that. Now say yes, and I'll have you sing this very afternoon at three, and then sign papers."

"I hardly know what to say, it is so sudden," pleaded the startled girl. "I must consult my friends. (Alas! the one maidenly fiction!) "And, you might not like me," she modestly said.

"Oh, I am quite sure of that. The whole town is talking of your success. I'll trust Mario, too. I must. He certainly has confidence in you, for, he told me your lessons were a paid credit, and you can finish your term when you wish, without loss. He predicts a great future for you. Now, that's why I want you. Bless you, Madame Patey," and the girl in self-defense, cut off his reminiscent flow by saying:

"I will meet you at three, then. If I please you, my answer will be ready then. When would you wish my services?"

"Oh, you have a week or ten days yet," cheerily said the director, diving for his hat, cane and gloves. "You must come as soon as you can. Try the hall and all that. Now, I rely on you alone. I had two very nice voices in my control; sorry to say both faded off; overstudy, breaking down; don't dare to tell them so. Now, I depend on you, and I'm sure we'll get on well together. My wife will make you at home in London, at once." The cheery fellow was off like a shot. He only turned back to say, "I refer to our ambassador, by permission."

A last little billet had escaped her eye! While the tumult of her surprise was calming itself, she opened a note, in which she recognized the never failing attention of

the "gentleman studying architecture." Mr. John Wayne Otis' familiar handwriting strangely cheered and inspirited her. His words were not of a romantic nature, but yet, they brought the blood to her cheeks. Her decision in his case was a favorable one before she had read the last lines. They were:

"DEAR MISS LYNDON:—May I call after dinner for a walk, and to tell you how charmed I was with your magnificent singing yesterday?" and the words, "Faithfully yours, John Wayne Otis," seemed to bring with them some peculiar mystic charm, for she hid the little note in her robe, where it rested upon her throbbing bosom—one white blossom in sorrow's dark crown!

There were strange thoughts chasing themselves in the lonely girl's disturbed mind. She sat down at the piano, and essayed to lift up her voice in song. She felt the storm in her heart break into tears which would not be sung, and she sought again the refuge of her lonely room. "I shall fail! I shall lose this one chance of safety; my one visible chance of life," she mourned, and yet some good angel whispered of hope. Great London; the sea of strange faces, new scenes; a singer's crowned life, all rose up before her. By a happy chance, her eyes rested upon the mockingly handsome picture of Frederick Wyman, "one of Nature's noblemen." With flashing eyes, she rose, and its tattered fragments were cast into the blackened ashes of the dying fire. "I will succeed! It is the one way out of bondage," she cried; and then the bitter rain of a helpless woman's tears!

There was no trace of faint heartedness lingering in her mind when she left Mrs. Pauline Buford's parlors at the Grand Hotel. A new light gleamed now in her eyes! The noble light of a proud woman's defiance, for, when the enthusiastic millionairess had forced upon her a promised

engagement to sing at the reception which was to dazzle the American colony, she cordially said: "You must not disappoint me, my dear child, for all our American friends will hear you. The engagement of my daughter to Mr. Wyman will bring our countrymen out in force. I see that the 'American Register' of to-day has the whole news. It is so strange." The room seemed to whirl around the girl, to whom this day was one of the gravest of surprises and of the strangest happenings.

"I do not wish you to feel that I am unmindful of your talents and, my child, if twenty-five hundred francs is not enough, let me know. You may, however, need a new dress," and, the kind-hearted millionairess altered her check to three thousand francs. "In four days, you sing, so you will have a little time to think over your selections. You must come as my guest."

Gladys Lyndon had bowed her grateful assent. "Thank God!" she murmured, as she hastened back to the singing, "No one dare now to connect my name with that man's, if he marries this girl, and her own mother continues to befriend me." It all seemed like an opportune rubbing of Aladdin's lamp, these turns of Fortune's wheels Her spirits rose, for Madame Pauline Buford had said, "I will present you to all my friends in London also, when you come over there to sing for me, this winter. They will be proud of the star of the West, our star of the Golden State."

Mrs. Buford, in her own imperious way, did nothing by halves. And, she had conceived a little scheme for her own future social exaltation. In her mind's eye she saw Gladys Lyndon, the great Diva of the future, and the "cognoscenti" murmuring, "Yes, a wonder! Mrs. General Buford discovered her and brought her out." There was also a spice of feminine triumph, in bearing off

the roc's egg discovered first by her secret rival, Milly Hammond, for, with the unerring instinct of woman's bodily jealousy, Pauline recognized in the velvet-eyed Hammond, a fair townswoman to be most keenly scrutinized. Pauline suspected her humbler fashionable sister of being no fixed star, no planet of stately orbit, but a dashing and uncertain comet, given to quaint "apparent motion," in her unsafe hyperbolic orbit, an interloper in the golden skies of the West, and one, doomed never to reach that blue and gold fretted zenith, which gleamed down on the Buford mansion on Nob Hill.

"So it was needless disgrace, deliberate insult which this wooer, fresh from the lips of a plighted bride, offered to me;" thus Gladys reflected, for she had not fathomed the secret of Wyman's mental excitement, due to the masked battery in the West, and the "familar" spirits he had toyed with. Ah! thou invisible spirit of wine! Many a deftly laid plan hast thou deranged for ever and aye! Yelling furies, snaky remorse, unceasing sorrows, horrible crimes, sins past all repairing, griefs the most despairing, hover around the "bright bowl" wherein the elixir of death sparkles in its dancing pride!

An elastic resentment swelled in the girl's pure angered breast as she swept into the room where Mario and Director Ernest Thomas awaited her, "I will succeed!" she pledged herself. Her mute eyes sought the maestro who, without a word, catching the sparkle of her eye, beckoned her to the Erard, over which his jeweled fingers strayed. Music deftly chosen by the proud teacher was there. "Sing," he said, cheerily. Fixing her eyes on the ceiling, the girl sang boldly, her last appeal for liberty, freedom, for a woman's life and honor in that one defiant song. It was the crisis of her imperiled womanhood!

She was still rapt in a dream, as the Director cried, in

wild enthusiam, "not another single note. It would be cruelty! You are to be mine! Glorious! Glorious!"

"Softly, softly," said the maestro, as he kissed the girl's fair, helpless hands, for the "glow which in her bosom dwelt, was fluttering faint and low."

"I will arrange ze papaire. You shall sign, not to-night, to-morrow. I have too, ze leetle condition. You come back to me." And he autocratically then prescribed rest and "a leetle sleep," for the happy young diva. "He shall a few more of the English guineas give," the great singer whispered. "And, not to own you forevaire. I study ze papaire. Brava!"

But, it was really as a prize to the overjoyed Thomas that the triumphant girl left the salle de musique. "Admirable famille, homme de coeur of ze high standing, ze friend of many years," her one reliable adviser had whispered, in answer to Gladys' furtive question, for since her rencontre at close quarters with the unmasked private Wyman, she now feared all men, as Ishmaelites of the baser sort. It was her first rough awakening to the fatal dangers of a beauty which had not dawned upon her own dreaming eyes. But, all men marked her down!

When the stars were shining down upon her again, with a light which had gleams of a happier future than the loneliness of these long days since she had left the convent walls, Gladys Lyndon walked out with the young gentleman from Boston. Seated in the Tuileres Gardens, where so many trysts of men and maid have hallowed the historic sward, the singer then told Otis of her intended departure from Paris. The young Bostonian listened gravely, with his head bowed, and was seemingly deeply intent upon the construction of a peculiarly raffiné English umbrella in his hand; it was his particular pride! He had thoroughly examined each stitch and joint, and the maiden

had faltered out every detail that she fain would have withheld, before he spoke.

Artful Jack Otis allowed her to spur herself gently on, for, in some mystic way, he felt that she saw the pain of this parting, written on his bowed face. In her own fond, womanly way, she would have him know that he was not to drop entirely out of her life. She had jealously guarded all reference to Frederick Wyman. By some intuitive feeling, the young millionaire's existence had been ignored by them. Gladys Lyndon, holding in her hand a cluster of bright, fresh roses, which the student of architecture has given her, knew that Otis yearned for even a single glimpse behind the gateways of her girlhood. She recognized his delicate chivalry in the way he had unfolded his own family history, and had painted the old home on the far-away Charles, with the stately mother therein, her heart filled with love, a living love for the graceful wanderer, and nursing a silent pride in the unreturning brave. There is no fond woman who cannot read her own lover's heart, and feel the mute pleadings, voiced only in the throbbing pulses, bounding in the fever of waiting the beloved one's word!

"It may seem sudden, it may seem strange, this change," she faltered, "but, I must go! I am not free to shape my own life."

A quick turn of his head, caused her fond heart to cease beating. There was a question in his eyes which her clear glance answered, and, he again bestowed especial care upon that wonderfully intricate umbrella construction.

A band was playing "Si vous n'avez rien à me dire," near them. She earnestly continued, in a low voice: "You know I am poor; alone in the world, and this engagement, with Mrs. Buford's friendship in London, may insure the completion of my education. If Miss Buford's marriage

to Mr. Wyman occurs this winter, in London, it will enable me to build up a good clientèle among the Americans, who entertain, as the Bufords will open their London house."

"When do you go?" said Mr. Jack Otis, in a smothered voice, and then he toiled, finishing with great care, a diagram he was tracing with the point of his beloved umbrella.

"As soon as Mrs. Buford's reception is over," softly answered Gladys, a regret shaking her voice, in a sorrow which she could not dissemble. "I will sign my contract to-morrow, and Mr. Thomas, who returns at once, will telegraph me the moment his wife has found me suitable apartments. I have nothing then, to keep me here, for my studies, if resumed, will be deferred until the next semestre. I feel, though, as if I were drifting on to some new, strange destiny."

"Will you make me one promise?" said the Bostonian, "I have never asked you a favor yet." He was gazing very frankly into her eyes.

"If I can grant it, certainly!" the singer replied, and then, she started at the strange sound of her own voice.

"I feel as if I were a sort of brother in a way, to you just now," the young man said, with a growing embarrassment, "Let me escort you down to Calais."

There were two very happy eyes shining on his, and a gentle pressure of his arm was her only answer; for they had now risen and were pacing homewards.

"There is one pleasant thing," very brightly and cheerfully said Jack Otis, finally breaking a silence which seemed to be interminable, "I shall hear you in London, and also see you, if you will allow me, as I am going to study the special architectural features of modern London. It is a subject which is vital to the proper extension of the special ideas of my book."

Miss Gladys Lyndon was silent. There was a peculiar brightness in the star-lit heavens just at that very moment! The delightful woman, happy at heart, fondly fancied the new light was in her own soul. Ah! graceful, loving dreamer. It was the radiance of the passing wings of the recording angel on his way to the pearly gates, to chalk up two marks of gigantic dimensions in "the white lie column," against Jack Otis. "One for calling himself brother," said the rosy angel, smiling in his work; "another, for that very lame yarn about the modern architecture of London."

"I'll leave places here for some more; that man is not to be trusted." And, the angel, sitting on the edge of a silvery sailing cloud, looked down upon the happy woman trembling in a strange, new delight she dared not own as love, a sweet unknown thrill. But, Jack Otis only lifted his mendacious eye to the starry heavens and winked at Venus, the splendid evening star. He saw in the dim far future, a light shining out for him in the dreaming eyes, whose glances seemed to signal, "Wait in hope."

Venus, amiable orb, sent down her silvery gleams of distant approval upon "Brother Jack!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A Flaw in the Deed.

Two weeks later, Mr. John Wayne Otis sprang up, after a long storm of applause had died away in the Albert Music Hall of London. It was the emphatic verdict of that most respected body, "the select British public." When Mr. Ernest Thomas had led off the blushing apparition who dispatched a Parthian dart in Jack's direction, the Bostonian edged his way quickly to the waiting-room door. He had profited by the opportunity to intently examine the construction of the Albert Music Hall, gazing upon its roof with a wildly throbbing heart, while Gladys Lyndon faced the Gorgon eye and hydra head of a strange audience. His pulses stopped beating, until, as the notes of the lovely stranger died away, a spontaneous demonstration showed that she had sung her way into the great heart of London! John Wayne Otis, in that supreme moment, turning his eager head, mentally photographed certain kindred souls whose faces were treasured as dear and unforgotten in later days—friends of his soul.

His architectural progress had been vary rapid and also satisfying. Several charming elevations of castles in Spain, only now needed finishing touches, and, he was very familiar with the external structure and internal arrangement of the homelike nest which Mr. Ernest Thomas had, with true fatherly care, sought out for the foreign song bird. He had been successful in inspiring a certain interest in his technical studies in the gentle bosom of Gladys Lyndon, for at both palace and fane, parks, and even upon the

oft-bridged river, the lady of his dreams shared his frequent voyages of exploration. The singular stimulus to his studies and their improved regularity, seemed to be entirely due to the appreciation of Miss Lyndon of his varied personal comments.

These London outings were decidedly halcyon days to Jack Otis the dissembler, who drifted, drifted very gaily down the stream of time, and his solicitude for his gentle companion was now crowned by her public triumph.

"I told you so," he smilingly said, as he grasped her trembling hand in the waiting-room.

"They were all so friendly," the orphaned girl murmured, as she turned her grateful eyes to the overjoyed director. She was tenderly grateful.

"Bless your dear heart, my dear child, they can't help loving you. You will be their idol, and the London rage, in a month." Director Thomas had swelled visibly in happiness.

Otis, still intent upon the ceiling, agreed heartily in the last clause, with some private reservation as to whose idol the dreaming beauty would be, but, all was well. At a little supper, in the very bosom, as it were, of Director Thomas' family, Mr. John Wayne Otis unloosed his collegiate Pegasus, and made some singularly neat references to the British Lion and the American Eagle, and indulged in pleasing hopes, etc., etc., some of them judiciously international in their scope, and others, a mere side issue, treasured in his own Yankee heart.

The arrival "on business," of General Hiram Buford, had enabled that mighty financial whale to float in, as a gigantic escort to Mrs. Milly Hammond, who had strangely "run over from Paris, to cheer and encourage dear Gladys.

A brief but meaning whisper, as Mrs. Hammond left

the waiting-room where she had penetrated with characteristic dash, informed Gladys of some important business which she must consult her upon. "At ten to-morrow, then, at my rooms," said the triumphant singer, with a vague new uneasiness. It had been the one cloud upon the evening of triumph.

Gladys Lyndon had faced her London audience with a trustful confidence, for the great success of her singing at Mrs. General Buford's great Parisian reception had justified Director Ernest Thomas in blackening the ink, and increasing the size of the posters which heralded the American stranger upon the bill boards. The impulsive generosity and warm-hearted hospitality of Mrs. Buford had caused Gladys Lyndon to forget the gloomy shadows of her last Paris days. In this hour of triumph, the words of Mrs. Milly Hammond called up the brutally menacing face of "Nature's nobleman," as he hurled his last insult at her.

"He is capable of anything!" thought the shuddering orphan, and a vague distrust of Mrs. Hammond haunted her slumbers that night.

London fogs, cold and gray, wrapped the streets as Mrs. Hammond rung the street bell on the next morning, at the singer's residence. There was a business-like air in her appearance, which was fitly accompanied by a face of supernatural gravity.

"I wonder how she will take it," muttered the lady of Van Ness avenue, as her foot slowly mounted the stair, for the cable, and a letter from Havre, had busied her again in Wyman's secret service, and that "nobleman of Nature" had decided to strike down the gentle dove, before she could flutter far out of his reach. "I don't more than half like this errand. It is dirty work after all," Mrs. Hammond ruminated, as she listened to the rustle of

Gladys' robes, and her quick, buoyant step resounded in the hall.

The girl was rosy in smiles, for a sheaf of London papers had been sent in by that proud impressario, Mr. Ernest Thomas. They were all marked to show the generous welcome of the musical critics to the lovely stranger. A beautiful basket of roses had reminded her that morning that Jack Otis was also carefully studying "greenhouse architecture," as well as his other special features, and strange to say, several other floral offerings bearing strange cards, with the most amiable anonymous inscriptions came also, and their signatures varied from "Ardent Admirer" to "Thine Only." With a passing sigh, the lonely beauty had waked at last to the consciousness that others besides Frederick Wyman had looked upon her face and found it fair. The woman chase! Never ending, always fierce.

"I called to see you, my darling, just to bring you a roll of the San Francisco papers. I know you will be very glad to see them, and ——," the hesitating woman said, "to know that you are well rested after your excitement. Ah! you are splendidly launched now," and in a strange, feverish manner, Milly Hammond talked all about the social field, until Gladys, who was still disturbed by the words "important business," said simply:

"You wished also to speak to me of some affairs?" There was a chilled frostiness in the reluctant words of her visitor.

"Yes, I am very sorry, but I received a letter yesterday afternoon from the bankers, which has alarmed me. I came to you at once, and I hope you may not be too much annoyed by them. It has kept me awake all night." Gladys Lyndon with a wave of self-protective feeling, recalled the fact that Wyman's name had not crossed

their lips for some time. This brought his dark shadow back.

"I am sure, I feel certain," stammered Milly Hammond, "that he must be in some trouble of some kind. You know that 'stock business' is so uncertain. I do not know either what has occurred between you two." She ceased, as Gladys Lyndon raised eyes to hers which showed a clear danger signal. She was a clear-eyed woman, brave and alert in her own defense.

"I am astonished that these gentlemen should have sent this through you, to me," the orphan girl coldly said, as her face whitened to marble. "It seems they would like to make up a public shame of a private obligation."

"But what will you do, my darling girl? Something must be done! And, at once," eagerly continued Mrs. Hammond, for once she had gone entirely too far. She felt it, as Gladys arose, and coldly said:

"I will consider the matter, and then write to them direct." The fashionable fraud dropped her gleaming eyes, defeated.

"But, what has been the cause of this unpleasantness between you and Mr. Wyman," persisted Milly Hammond. She would have been glad to have recalled this question, at any cost, when the singer said:

"I have never mentioned any unpleasantness between Mr. Wyman and myself. What do you know of any such matter?" And then, Miss Lyndon steadily said: "I must go now and write to these men."

The lady from Van Ness avenue felt that she had sadly blundered. "I wonder if Strong has at last found out her address, and written to her. This newspaper notoriety and all this musical glory, has lost to Wyman the control of this girl. Perhaps her manager will help her. She is out of his power at any rate, in England."

As Milly Hammond stepped into her cab, she reflected

that Gladys had not asked her to repeat her call, and had made no proffer of a return visit. "She has taken the alarm," she murmured. "My influence over her is forever at an end."

In a somewhat resentful mood, Mrs. Hammond drove back to the cable office and dispatched to Frederick Wyman, San Francisco. Her reply was as follows:

"Orders obeyed. Too late. She remains silent. Can do no more. Greatest musical success possible in London."

"I think Mr. Frederick Wyman is snarling himself up badly," remarked the beauty to herself, late that night, as she unloosed her girdle in the sacred privacy of her own room. She was smiling softly at a beautiful diamond bracelet which General Hiram Buford had clasped on her rounded arm, "with a few appropriate remarks," on this happy night, for in an abstracted moment, he had damned Mr. Wyman up and down, to use his energetic expression, "as, only a smart fool."

"The meanest kind of a fool is a man who is 'dead gone on himself,' Milly," the millionaire said gruffly, in explanation of his outbreak. "I have been entangled by this smart lad, and led on into a false position. I fear he has got out 'over his depth.' It may take me home suddenly, I am afraid. I must bring him 'into line.' The bank has wired to me for instructions. You can either go with me, or else, stay here till I come back." Whereat Mrs. Hammond tenderly smiled. Patting him upon his rubicund cheek, she gently called him "Old Reliable."

"I'll do anything you wish," she murmured, and then, mentally nailed his colors to the mast. He clasped her to him in delight.

Four days later, Mrs. Hammond was astounded at the reply of the Parisian bankers to a rather extended letter of

official explanation she had written, in reply to the open letter addressed to her. "Can it be Strong who has come to the front?" she muttered. "The game is up now. And now, the girl hates me. I wonder if I shall answer Strong's letter," for, the lawyer's letter of inquiry burned on her bosom. "He was always devoted to me. He will soon get on his feet again, and, I may need his legal advice some day." Whereat, she indited a very friendly message to Waldo Strong and enclosed clippings of the wonderful success of the "California Diamond" at the American Minister's and Mrs. Buford's in Paris, as well as a carefully drawn sketch of the girl's status on the Continent, leaving out all reference to London. She also ignored Wyman, whose "timely bridge over" was no longer needed; for, was not that peaceful warrior, Hiram Buford, at her beck and call?

The sharp snap of the banker's letter disturbed her. It read:

"MADAM:

"As the matter you refer to has been settled in full, all further correspondence is useless upon that subject, our instructions having been duly fulfilled. We beg leave to remain," etc., etc.

"I suppose the manager has gladly come to the rescue," decided the irritated woman, whose curiosity was destined never to be satisfied, for, though she approached Miss Gladys Lyndon, now a fully developed "star," and rapidly moving on to be "the rage," the young cantatrice was equably and professionally polite, but, as distant as her sister stars in the zenith. The stroke had failed, and yet the rescue of Miss Lyndon's name had been effected by another than the warm-hearted Ernest Thomas, Director, etc. etc.

It had fallen about very strangely; for, an interval of

stony despair and of stormy grief, the last, a tribute to her womanhood, had been followed by the utter breakdown of Miss Lyndon. The hunted girl had fled to her rooms and, casting the roll of Californian papers on the table, read again, with a sickening heart, the brutally direct words of the letter which Mrs. Hammond had given to her. One clause had pierced her heart with the bitter shame of poverty; a galling chain which had cramped her soul in her whole lonely life, the badge of dependent humiliation. Her eyes were streaming as she read:

"Our principal, Mr. Frederick Wyman, has directed, that in the event of Miss Lyndon abandoning the course of studies marked out for her, and leaving Paris, she be requested to replace at once, the sums expended upon her travel and musical education, up to the time of such abandonment.

"We regret to learn that such is the case, and, therefore, to avoid personal unpleasantness with a young person, a stranger to us, beg you to acquaint her with the immediate necessity of depositing the two thousand dollars, so far drawn, upon the canceled letter of credit. We stand charged by our New York house with this sum. Your immediate attention to this will greatly oblige us."

It was in vain that the sympathetic housemaid, Harriet, endeavored, in the lapse of the afternoon, to arouse Miss Gladys Lyndon to the necessity of descending into the drawing-room, and meeting Mr. John Wayne Otis. That "architectural expert" was also a man most fair and comely to view. He had the "voice of a singing bird," to the appreciative ears of the comely housemaid, who was of a romantic turn of mind. She recognized in Jack Otis the character of Cyril Brandt, the virtuous and good-looking young artist, who rescues the heiress of too much good looks, in a stunning novelette, "The Earl's Plaything, or

Webs of Doom," a serial which was now running contemporaneously with her daily household duties. Jack Otis was shyly casting out all his "ground tackle," and the august face of Her Majesty had beamed with a fixed smile on many half crowns, which had found their way into pretty Harriet's apron pocket. Artful Brother Jack!

"Don't you be cast down, sir. Wait a bit. Miss Gladys will be down directly, I'm sure. I'll work on her a bit. You see, sir, she's been cryin' steady all day. That there American lady has been here with a letter and not even a cup of tea will she take." The frank-eyed maid darted a look of friendly encouragement from under her snowy cap at Jack Otis, who stood irresolute.

"Damn that Hammond woman!" he cried savagely.

"Ah! I have it," he thought, as his curly head went down over the center table, and he quickly penciled on his card. "I must see you to-day, I may have to go home to America at once. It is a vital moment."

"Now! give her this," cried Jack, and he deftly duplicated his great "half-crown" act. "You shall have a Christmas box, if you make her come down," he insidiously promised as Harriet sped away; and the recording angel, gazing down from the heavenly perch, then and there, "chalked up a stunner," in the white lie column, on this last feat of mendacity, and "stood by, awaiting orders."

John Wayne Otis measured the drawing-room with wolf-like strides, and he contemplated certain gloomy funereal effects in case of failure; but, a foot as light as a snow flake was soon heard upon the stair, soft as the dews that fell that night. The frightened girl murmured, "I could not let you go without one word."

The "brother" of the "architectural exploring" coterie muttered, "and, I shall not let you go until I know what is your sorrow."

The last whisper of his soliloquy sounded in his heart of hearts very much like "My poor darling!" Very brother-like, very!

Somewhere, Jack had read that a vigorous self-assertion at the critical time was a "happy thought" in cases of this kind. His finely vibrating voice belied the speechless entreaty of his eyes, as he led her to a seat.

"I can not, and will not, leave London until I know what troubles you. We are both alone in the world. Now, I have no sister, of course, but I'm sure in your place, you know, she would just tell me all. I don't know what there is you could not say to me," and awed by the suffering on her fair and gentle face, John Wayne Otis deliberately walked to the central arch of the rooms, and turned his head away. "That will have its effect," he prided himself, and the recording angel executed another neat stroke in the list of Jack's peccadillos, waiting with suspended stylus, for "more." But, the sound of sobbing had drawn Jack Otis back to the girl's side with rapid strides.

"By the God of Heavens! I will know," he cried. "Don't you see how I am suffering?"

And as the fair head was bowed before him, its golden hair blinding her eyes, as Miss Lyndon murmured at last, the source of her sorrows. His imperative assertion of a shadowy brotherhood broke down the only remaining barrier of her pride.

"It is that. I'll tell you all. With a little time, and I can repay this." And the sobbing girl then began to falter the acknowledgement of her once welcome obligation, but which was now a galling chain.

Mr. Jack Otis deliberately stopped her with a "regular whopper." He had possessed himself of her helpless hand, the hand on which he saw the fair emplacement for a wed-

ding ring, and as he gently possessed himself of the letter, he kissed the hand in a brotherly fashion.

"I'll mark him nothing for that," mused the recording angel, far above. "I would do the same myself, that is, if I were not an angel," and the heavenly official shifted uneasily upon his golden cloud. For once, he envied an erring mortal.

"Now listen to me," sternly said the Bostonian. "Do you remember you have to sing to-morrow night. Now, I have to run over to Paris to say "Good-bye" to the best artist fellow I know. I happen to know these bankers very well, and if you will allow me, I will have this affair set off in a private account, which you can settle as you wish to. It will at once relieve you, and, it's just the same you know." There was a gleam of relief, a shade of loving doubt, and a world of proud loving shame in her trembling eyes, as she fixed them upon him.

"You are not deceiving me. You are taking no burden on yourself?" she said. "I was going to ask Mr. Thomas himself to arrange it that way, but, my childhood has been so lonely, so sad. I have so few friends. I was afraid." He could have crushed her in his strong arms. He smiled to himself, "Only wait."

"By Jove!" most cheerfully cried Otis, as he glanced at the clock, "I've only the time left to get my little traps and make sure of the train. Now, you must promise me three things. I've not a moment to lose." She smiled so brightly at him through her tears. In her fond woman heart she knew at last, that her own will had gone out from her; that Jack Otis by a daring escalade, had made a lodgment in her heart. She felt by the quickened pulses throbbing wildly, a melting glow in her bosom, that it were well he should go now. And she trusted to him, to use his victory so mercifully.

"What shall I do?" she murmured.

"First, rest and dismiss this vexing matter entirely from your mind. Secondly, allow me to take this letter. Thirdly, promise me to answer, as I wish, any dispatch I might have to send from Paris, on the formalities of this matter."

"I will trust to you to act for me," she said as she rose, for, in his honest eyes she could see his prayer that she would yield. "To act for me," she said slowly, "as if you were in my place, and—I were your own brother Jack."

Mr. Otis remained spell-bound at her side, lulled by the sweetness of her accents as she faltered the last words, and when the young knight errant lifted his eyes, she was gone.

A little knot of blue ribbon had fallen from her breast, as she had bowed her head in sorrow at the table. He picked it up, kissed it with a wild glee and sped away, but, at the door, intercepted by the handsome Harriet, he remembered a half sovereign which in his mind, he had promised her some time before. He whistled loudly and merrily, to the disturbance of the peace of good Queen Victoria, as he dashed away to his hotel. "I think I see the drift of this thing. I will 'knock out' one 'dragon,' at any rate," confidently predicted Otis.

All the way over the Channel, he was still singularly jubilant, and never gayer in his life than when next day at noon he entered the Paris banking office.

He held Miss Lyndon's letter in his hand. The grave bank manager was politeness itself, and his face showed an amicable concern when the Bostonian airily stated that Miss Lyndon's slight illness prevented her writing; but, he was very careful to preserve the receipt for two thousand dollars, and "in full of all demands," which he received in exchange for four hundred pounds and more of good English, crispy, crackling notes.

"We regret to have been obliged to address Miss Lyndon in such positive terms," began the manager.

"Oh, I'm quite sure of it," cheerfully answered Otis, giving him a cold stare, which caused the banker to mutter, "That fellow is an American desperado;" but John Wayne Otis did not care, for he was already spinning away along the boulevard after he had sent a brief dispatch to Miss Lyndon, which stated: "All amicably arranged. Choose your own time. Back to-morrow evening."

He wandered out in a most satisfied frame of mind. In his room he carefully tied up the letter and the banker's receipt, with the bit of blue ribbon which he had guarded, and then deeply ensconced the packet in an inner pocket, directly against the corded muscles of his manly breast.

The genial recording angel smiled from above and deliberately laid down his stylus. "Good boy, Jack!" he authoritatively remarked. "Your current account is all right. The end justifies the means," and the clerical seraph, then cast his eyes in the direction of other erring mortals, and made very light marks all day, in honor of the frank manhood of that "genial malignant," brother Jack. "They're not such a bad lot after all," mused the angel, looking down with a charitable smile on us poor worms below.

There was a vast deal of conjecture on the San Francisco Stock Exchange as to the reported sale of the "Lone Star" in London. The great financial storm had blown over, and the eddies and whirls of speculation seethed and bubbled as of yore in Pine street and upon California street and in the alleys adjacent thereunto, as well as the sidewalks, nay the very gutters. The journals and the society columns were redolent of the perfections of the "four kings," for the shadowy crown which dropped from the brow of the dead banker, Ralston, was now broken up. Its jewels divided, but undimmed in luster,

gleamed upon four alien brows. The losses "readjusted themselves;" broken hearts were slowly vulcanized to a contented poverty, or thrilled in the craze of drink. Some, alas! ceased their agonized beatings in the suicide's forgotten grave. On the whole, the market had entered upon a healthier condition. An upheaval was confidently predicted. The "funeral truths," turned end for end and revamped, furnished forth the "wedding breakfast," for King Bank of California was dead, and King "Bonanza" reigned instead.

The "reaching forth" for the coin of the gullible was deftly continued, and the swish, swirl and glitter of society sparkled around the yawning man-traps of the stock exchanges as of yore; new faces at the Western Monte Carlo, but, the same old deadly unerring "deal" on the unvarying principle, "heads I win, tails you lose." The pepper box of fortune rudely shaken sifted out strange and peculiarly aromatic grains, but on the ringing golden wheels of twenty-dollar pieces, the car of civic progress rolled along in its usual occidental fashion, with fits and starts.

Mr. Waldo Strong was busied late in his office, and divided his evenings between Inspector Stanton and the genial bank manager.

"See here, Strong!" said the great financier of the "Anglo." "You must get your guns soon ready for action, I've a dispatch that Wyman himself will be here in a week."

"I'll be ready for him then, double shotted," grimly answered the lawyer. "I have my cases arranged so I can take a few days. I have also spotted him by telegrams from Paris and New York. I will go up the road, lay over at Truckee and at Reno, and let him pass me. Then, I'll turn around and follow him down. I do not wish to

be in Virginia City when he is there. I will give you a written opinion, a very brief one, on which you can offically tell him why the title of his mine is rejected."

The banker mused: "It's a pity for us London men that he does not own it. It is a magnificient property, our expert says, and the north end is now giving wonderful indications. There are five or six hundred feet of the 'Lone Star' still unexplored in that direction."

"I'll find out the true inwardness of the whole affair," grimly smiled Strong. "Give me that secret order to Wells, Fargo & Co.'s bank and Express, to show me their records in Nevada and at Truckee. That's all I want. Stanton has obtained the pictures of these three worthies, and, his postal clerks will telegraph him daily Wyman's location on the overland railway. I will get the news at the Truckee and Virginia City Postoffices, and my own detective is now at Virginia City. Oh! I'll roast the villain."

The lawyer unlocked his safe. "Keep that till he forces it from you. It has the key of the rejection in its few words; and if he falls into the trap, as I think he will, then, we have him ready for prison stripes," Waldo Strong said, with a pitiless curl of his lips.

As the banker walked homeward, he muttered: "That lawyer chap is a cold and unforgiving enemy. He has got it in for Mr. Wyman."

Inspector Stanton, strolling in to smoke an evening pipe, electrified Strong, who was still pacing the office floor like a panther.

He casually said: "By the way, I met that remarkable party, Andy Bowen. He is down here on a little visit. He is going to stay a few days. He is still ignorant of this trouble, for he laughed out when I asked for Wyman."

"Oh! Having a jolly time in Paris. Guess he'll stay

there all winter. He is opening up the mine slowly. He made enough on his last cute deal, to last him several years."

The lawyer's eyes flashed fire as he thought of his heedless ruin. Speculation had withered the fruit of ten years' hard professional work.

"I asked him in an idle way about Devereux," continued Stanton.

"'He was a very nice fellow,' remarked Andy. 'A sickly chap; oh yes, I remember him well. A kind of a clerk or business man; and he had a nice little woman and child, too, down here at the Bay. He was always talking of his wife "Mary." I know he named the mine "Mariquita" for her. There was another claim with the English name, and we put it into "greaser" Spanish. And he also had a little girl named "Hope." That I remember, for he showed me her picture.'"

"Go on, go on!" cried Strong, now wild with excitement.

"'Oh, yes. He left Virginia in the spring of 'sixty-three, and went down to Holman's Ranch. Never heard of him afterwards,' so Andy finally said." After a drink had warmed him up, the inspector slowly said, looking at some memory notes: "And then, Bowen wound up, 'Wyman followed him and bought out his three-quarter interest. I wanted to get a hack at that mine myself, but Steve Berard had a kind of an interest in it with Wyman when he was killed.' 'Who?' said I, 'Berard or Devereux?' 'Bless you,' roared Andy, 'Devereux wasn't killed. He went down to 'Frisco and I guess went home East, or went into some business. Leastways, he didn't die in Nevada; not that I know of.' So you see, Brother Strong, this big fellow never heard of Devereux's death." The inspector was now eager, "Who kept it quiet, and why?"

"That is for me to find out!" replied the lawyer, as he grasped the inspector's hand. "Now, Billy, I must do a bit of writing, and get ready for my trip. I depend on you to watch Wyman till I return. When he comes, your men have all got your private tips."

Stanton nodded. "Good luck, old man. I'll go over to Oakland with you in the morning." He disappeared murmuring, "I'm glad this thing will come to a head soon, for Strong will surely go crazy over this whole mystery, unless we reach a crisis," and he then, disappeared in the night.

But, the lawyer was still walking the office, an hour later. "I see the whole villainy. Wyman robbed his murdered partner, Berard, who had assassinated Devereux so as to steal his mine for the two thieves. He was cut off by chance in his tide of fortune, but, oh, my God! I must, I will find Hope Devereux, the missing child. She must be alive somewhere in the wide West, and she may need her million. She shall have it, too!"

At that very moment Gladys Lyndon, in the quiet of her London apartment, had been looking, with a strange yearning, at the details of what has been her town life, in the San Francisco newspapers, furnished by the hypocriticial kindness of Mrs. Milly Hammond. The girl's mind now was freed of its haunting money cares, and the shadow of shame had been lifted from her future. "I can pay it all off this winter, easily," she joyously cried. Jack Otis had explained how "perfectly agreeable" it would be to replace the funds "at any reasonable future time." "I had it set aside for you as a special matter, and to relieve you of uneasiness, I brought a full receipt on the Wyman account; all you have to do is to simply ignore any letters or references of those people." In some haste he had left her, in the hope to find that a possible fortunate arrange-

ment of his affairs might prevent a home voyage. He had "his reasons" for remaining in London, to "complete his studies." So sitting alone, bright hearted and happy, the girl's mind had drifted far away back to California.

An especially prominent advertisement attracted her eye in the paper she read. Its head lines "Devereux! Devereux. Information Wanted," were enough to bring the blood rushing to her cheeks, and, when she had finished reading it, amazement was written upon her face. "Can this be truth or only a dream?" she said as her childhood, with all its roll of sorrow, swept back upon her once more.

Long, long did the lonely woman pace the floor before she could decide to face the uncertain seas of fate. "Should she answer, or not?" "What can Fortune hold in store for poor orphaned Hope Devereux, the child of convent charity?" she cried through her tears and the words "Mother, mother!" were lovingly murmured, as she thought of a far-away grave.

Her singing name had been selected in deference to the wishes of the good nuns who always piously discouraged all public careers for women, especially the unholy art of music. The dance, song, and the tempting theater were regarded by these unmolested good Samaritans as only broad roads to the bottomless pit. She knew not that her own mortal enemy had unwillingly placed his very deadliest foe upon the lost trail, which led his banded enemies back to the mystery of the "Mariquita" mine. The Hammond woman had ruined her paramour in trying to serve his cowardly revenge.

Mr. Frederick Wyman was a morose and moody man, as he whirled along westwardly accompanied by his gloomy thoughts. He was not an unmindful lover, for at each principal city he daily dispatched his greeting to Miss Minnie Buford by cable. "It will serve to make the

General feel I am only a sighing, happy lover, not a man fighting in the dark for a debated million. But," he finally decided, "I have played my cards to win. What in the devil is behind this matter? I don't know. Wilder telegraphs me, there is nothing yet new. I suppose it is only after all some pig-headed objection of this Englishman, who demands Her Majesty's patent."

The cool young operator stopped suddenly. "By Jove I have not yet myself obtained a United States patent. It may be only that, perhaps a mere formality. Ah! I had neglected that." He was thoughtful for a whole day. Several tourists of his bowing acquaintance had already decided "that Wyman had lost himself in a fit of puffed-up vanity, since his 'Lone Star' deal."

As the train rolled across the muddy Missouri, and began to race down the Platte valley, the borderer dropped all memories of Milly Hammond, all vain regrets for the chasm now dividing him forever from the beautiful Gladys, and even ignored that human glass of absinthe, his sprightly fiancée.

"I must not make one false step," he reflected. "In a stock deal, the man who deliberates is a 'goner,' like 'the woman who hesitates.' I must be ready to fight this with a cool nerve."

"That's the devil of American wealth," he sneered. "A gamble, a struggle, a life and death intrigue to get it, and, the devil's own job to hold it."

He strangely never suspected Waldo Strong. "It may be some beach-combing journalist, some 'smart Aleck' who wishes to 'bluff' me into a fat compromise. But, suppose they should really produce some one to represent the shadowy Devereux title? I must have a good lawyer. I absolutely must own the judge who tries the case. Now, if Vinnie, damn her, were only here, I could use her. She

could twist old Merrick around her finger; and he is the only lawyer in Nevada who will 'stay bought' when you have 'bought him once.' Is her finger in this pie? No," he reluctantly admitted. "She only makes a fool of herself over that drunken scoundrel Hooper. There's nothing in it, but revenge for him. Bah! it surely can't be him. He would be chased over the world."

After passing Salt Lake, Wyman who "faced the music" now like a man, had decided to retain Judge Merrick, that walking encyclopedia, as counsel, and then get a "working lawyer" to assist under his own eye. "But, but," the young conspirator owned to himself, "this thing will at last depend upon the judge who tries it. Only one human being can help me, and that is old Hiram, for he and his great associates own the judge, body and soul."

Mr. Wyman was well aware of the inner light of this poker-playing legal luminary, who might soon pass upon his title to a hard won fortune. Strange whispers of the malleability of this oily official were furtively bandied about, but under the hushed breath. He played an even-handed game with the bar, he practiced a little "before it," and, if unscrupulous, his ability raised him above all detailed attack, and a great banded money monopoly now backed him up. "The quality of mercy" lingered not in his cold, gray eye. "If the worst comes to the worst, I will cable for Hiram, make a clean breast of it to him, and have him buy this one man's decision."

Frederick Wyman decided to keep intact his parchment piles of bond reserves. "They will have to go pretty high to outbid me," he grimly smiled. And fearful of losing prestige with Buford, as well as the ineffable happiness of escorting Miss Minnie, resplendent in laces and orange blossoms, into the Golden house on Nob Hill as his wife, he decided to develop at once his unknown enemy.

"They will find me silent in my breastworks, and have to fight to the death to blow me out of them," and so, with an eagle eye, he measured look and deportment, as he neared the Nevada line. "I ought to have some one to depend on now," he mused. Wilder, Brown, Hopkins, any of them, might become dangerous, but, I was a fool to leave Morani away there in London; and yet, if he can trace down Hooper! I will be repaid if I can only land that scoundrel in prison should a trial come on out here. There, chained up, he is harmless."

For, Mr. Wyman had made up his mind to reimburse all the liberal "preliminary expenses," in London, placate General Buford, and let the great scheme of "working the London market" go by for a time. "If I hold my own, satisfy Buford, and win his daughter as my wife, I am forever 'one of the upper crust,'" he laughed, and I'll give the old man a good show in the mine. By Jove! I can put enough stock in his name, after I marry the girl. We can open the north ground, and dig out enough extra to make me forget this. So, Morani can come home at once if he can't trace Hooper out, but I am a wife, and a mighty smart one, ahead anyway."

Wyman became excited as he neared Virginia City, for the news of a wonderful discovery on the north end of his mine, was heralded in the Elko newspaper, "an ore body of surpassing richness and supposed to dip into the 'Lone Star.'" "Shall I go to Virginia City or run on to San Francisco?" he mused. After an hour's deliberation, he decided that he would be at a great disadvantage alone in Virginia City. "I will have all the gossips down on me. Who knows what spies may dog me, and in my own headquarters, I have a good working corps at hand, and can calmly watch these fellows develop whatever game they have.

So it was only two days later, with the smiling air of a returned social Alexander, he looked in at all his clubs, at once sent a brief note to the manager of the "Anglo" Bank asking for an appointment, and then discussed a raffine dinner while listening one after another to the skeleton reports of Brown, Hopkins, and the annoyed and disturbed Wilder.

When the two men were left alone to their wine, Wilder said, gravely: "Mr. Wyman, you must give me now some definite orders as to what basis you want the 'Lone Star' manipulated on 'in the Board.' I've risked my own coin, to hold the fort in your absence."

"What do you want me to do? are you faint hearted?" sneered Wyman, who had heard nothing of any trouble but the simple advertisment query, and the decided rejection (without explanation), of the mine's title, by the bank.

"I want either a sound guarantee with a deposit, or coin daily paid at three o'clock, to square each day's transactions," stoutly said Horace Wilder, who seemed a bit irascible. He had felt the distance unconsciously assumed by the new "society light," for the "engagement" gave a shining aureole to Wyman's handsome head. Another crowned snob.

"Perhaps I had better change my broker?" harshly cried Wyman.

"Perhaps!" replied Wilder with a peculiar smile, as he promptly grasped his hat, cane and gloves, and sallied forth alone. Wyman let him go away still unanswered and ruffled.

"There sneaks away the first frightened rat!" growled Wyman, "but, the ship is not sinking. Not yet!" As he threw himself on his luxurious bed after the last of his underlings had left him, Wyman lay long with his gleam-

ing eyes fixed upon the painted loveliness of Vinnie Hinton floating there above him. The "half-cryin' eyes" seemed to call back the days of love's witchery which brought a sigh, for he murmured, "You were always my luck, Vinnie. You swept the field for me, and, I would sooner have you here, near me, in my arms to-night, than all the paid advice that coin can give, for crooked as your wild life has been, you are the only 'dead square' one in the whole lot," and, he drained a larger glass of cognac than he knew, for the sun was streaming through his windows before the strange attendant dared to rouse him from a sleep of exhaustion.

He was now on the field of action and within the enemy's territory. "Who the devil can be behind this? That fellow Strong has had no mining practice. Wilder tells me that he is in the courts every day, digging away for his board money, and Jumbo, Boardman & Harrigan have always been the bank's lawyers. I suppose they are all at sea, sailing around a fly speck. Well, the manager's letter will soon develop the game." He growled out for his man, and, it was a first bad omen for him that he had to send twice for Mr. Horace Wilder before the "Board" opened.

"Why didn't you come as usual?" demanded Wyman.

"I thought that you were going to have another broker," quietly said Wilder, and, for the first time in his life on the "street," Wyman operated "under conditions." It was check number one, to his rising vanity.

While he awaited his morning mail, Waldo Strong, that eminent counselor, was seated on the piazza of the Truckee Hotel, engaged in swopping "bear and trout" stories with the genial landlord.

"I didn't reckon ye'd find yer way back," the host remarked, setting down his glass.

"Oh, I have to run up to Elko, and I wanted to see about my next vacation hunt," the lawyer lightly replied. He had left San Francisco on the positive telegram that Wyman had passed Truckee, and when he strolled over to the Postoffice, he had in readiness a secret ally there in Stanton's confrère, an under official of the Postoffice department.

"Let us walk around the town a bit," the secret friend said, as they meandered among stumps and movable creeks. "We are at least free from being overheard. I have had all the Wells, Fargo records looked over, and I brought the one record book you wish to use, over to the office. I have there a room where no one can see you for I had it built of double two-inch planks crossed, to keep out snow, bears, pistol balls, the drunken lumbermen, and other all-around happenings. By the way, there's your notary now, pointing to the 'Blue Wing.' Better catch him before you find him 'too full for utterance.'"

Mr. Waldo Strong led in the "bear hunt" as a topic, after introduction, and with judicious spiritual consolation, was secretly delighted to find the man's mind and memory still good. The Postmaster was an old friend, and with genial bar-keeper to aid, Mr. Strong was speedily at home in Truckee. But, it was the official himself, who led up to the now living topic of the great rich strike on the north end, and the greatly enhanced value of the "Lone Star." The future fortune of Wyman, and the fame of his approaching marriage, filled the Virginia City papers.

"He's a rastler," the man of many fortunes said, nodding for a refilling of his glass, "is that same Wyman. I'm told he goes way into the millions now. And, as I told Andy Bowen only the other day—you know big Andy, everybody knows Andy," the notary gulped his words with his drink, "I certified the deed to that mine right

here in Truckee, for five hundred dollars. By God, that's luck! That's nigger luck!"

"Pshaw! Nonsense!" defiantly remarked the Postmaster. "You're blowing!"

Strong was quietly examining the handsome barkeeper who, moving to the end of the bar, said sotto voce in apology, "Thut fellow's the damnedest liar in Truckee, and that's saying a good deal."

"I have got the papers to prove it!" remarked the irate notary, "and, I won a box of cigars, too, from Andy. He said the mine's name was the 'Lone Star,' and I went to my book, and showed it to be the 'Mariquita.' I got the cigars, too. You see the papers was sent to Virginia and recorded, and they came back here, for Devereux went on down to San Francisco first, and Wyman came back and got the papers. I know it cost him a hundred dollars for the record and the certified copy, and he kept the original. Didn't want to lose it. I sent the papers up to Virginia myself."

"What's become of Devereux? I knew him once. I suppose it's the same man. I've lost sight of him for a year or so. I thought he was up here. I want to see him myself about an old matter." Strong was very deliberate in his casual remarks.

"I've never seen him since he went down to 'Frisco that time. I'd know him among a thousand, for he could punish more whisky than I can," laughed the stubborn notary.

"Was that the man?" said Strong, throwing down a picture on the card table as he went to the glass case and selected some cigars.

"Not by a jug full!" shouted the half drunken notary. "Any damned fool would know that's Wyman, 'lucky Wyman,' only, it's a heap better looking than he is. He's too puffed up to patronize Truckee hotels now. I guess

he'll do the 'private car' act soon, like some men I knew once swinging a pick at three dollars a day. Good God! they're lords of the earth now. No, that's Frederick Wyman, Esq."

"Ah! Now you are talking turkey, stranger! That's Mr. Robert Devereux and I saw him get the clean stuff, five hundred dollars in yellow twenties, for his interest. I know, for I watched him and won one of them. Yes, that's him. Devereux must have struck a streak of luck. He was pretty shabby then, and I remember he wore a sailor cap with gold anchor buttons on it. I found one of them in the office and I was going to give it to Wyman, but the jewelers here told me it was only gold washed. Why I've got the papers now, to show for the record. Devereux signed the deed in my very presence according to law. No, it was a square transaction. What a lucky stroke for Wyman. He's a big man now."

"Well you picked out the right man," quietly laughed Strong. "You have a very good memory."

"I remember it mighty well, and I've often talked it over with the Wells, Fargo's agent. Old Schwartz was my head agent then, I was only assistant, and he's right over there now. We had a talk all three of us, about sending up the certified copy to Virginia." And so, the triumphant notary dragged the two men over to H. Schwartz & Co.'s store and later, exhibited his official books. It was true!

When Mr. Waldo Strong left Truckee that afternoon it was with a promise to return and join all the boys in a grand outing. He was waved off by a friendly delegation, for "bear and trout" stories and good old Bourbon whisky had whiled away the golden afternoon. It was with a joyful heart, the lawyer ran on to Carson and was one of three or four, who descended from the train at the straggling hamlet of Willows Cross Roads.

"Seems to be an old timer and a very nice fellow," remarked the storekeeper the next morning, as Strong boarded the Virginia City train. "He looks prosperous. I suppose he has made his pile since the old days. Dear me! I had forgotten the dates. How time flies!" for over a hot Scotch and good Havana, the circle around the box stove had rehearsed the old story of the killing of the friendless stranger by Steve Berard, in that very dingy bar-room.

"I remember the boys were going to put him up a fence and a headboard," said the one time clerk of the store, "for, I wrote down the name and the date in the back of our ledger. I was bookkeeper then. It was before I went into business for myself. Their enthusiasm cooled off. They soon forgot him."

With a bit of good-humored banter,the lawyer was one of an amused crowd who saw the old books brought down and the inscription found. "I wrote it myself, 'Robert Devereux,' from a letter which we found in his pocket, from his wife, too. I was on the Coroner's jury. She must have been a very nice woman. It was a kindly, loving letter," said the well-to-do middle aged man.

"What became of the letter?" said Strong, his eyes sparkling.

"Squire Holman took away the whole thing," said the casual visitor rising.

"And,I will tell you it was a damned shame!" cried a deep voice, as a big teamster knocked out his pipe, and then slowly prepared to refill it, cutting off his tobacco from a huge plug with a big bowie-knife. Everyone started as "Big Aleck" chipped in; for, he was a man of very few words. "I was only a raw boy then and hauling for old Holman. I tell you that man Devereux never drew his pistol. He hadn't none."

"What do you mean?" cried a dozen curious voices.

"I had seen that old robber Holman carry that same pistol himself, and he dropped it under the dying man. He whipped it off the bar, and then lied about it. I seen him carry it around the ranch afterwards himself."

"Why did you not tell?" all cried, and Strong started up.

"I was afeared to. I was only a timid boy and old Holman used to whip me. He's dead and gone now, the old scoundrel, but, I saw Mother Louisa, the dear, good, old woman, often cryin' at this poor man's grave. It was a dirty, put-up job. She used to steal out there alone when Holman wuz away, and cry and pray. This yere Devereux was a right decent man. I used to go a fishin' with him. He was gentle and quiet an' sickly. I know where he's buried now, and I've piled big rocks on the grave, to keep the coyotes away, many a time."

"Well, Berard got it in the back of the neck," cried a wrathful one.

"It was a bloody shame," said the teamster, rising, as his hungry mules outside, shook their brazen bells.

"Was that like Devereux?" said Strong, holding out Hooper's picture, the "Truckee Devereux."

"No more'n I look like him," flatly cried the teamster. "Devereux was a delicate kind of man, gentle and sickly lookin'. This man's a sort of a sport, bigger, younger, and heaps better lookin'. No, siree! Devereux was a little man, and light complexioned. Fetch me his real picture, and a dozen men here, can pick him out as well as me. That's not him, oh, no!" and big Aleck strolled away.

The lawyer was now eager to verify only his last vital facts, at Virginia City. He busied himself with other matters and dared not pursue his personal inquiries too far, for he might be spotted. Wyman was no fool. It was only when nearing Virginia City that he finally cast up all his

new proofs. "The personation of the dead man by Hooper is positive. By heavens! I will find Hooper. I must find him." With a prudence suggested by Wyman's growing prestige, the counselor had telegraphed to his detective to meet him at Gold Hill.

Down on the neck of the divide the two men wandered away, as the dying sun lit up the bare five miles of stony spurs, embosoming there a thousand millions.

"You need not waste any more time here," the secret agent said. "I have traced up all the Wells, Fargo & Co.'s books. I found the transaction only after days of search. This Steve Berard deposited ten thousand dollars to the credit of Frederick Wyman a few weeks after the murder, and just before he was killed himself, by the Vigilantes. The returned checks and endorsements show that Wyman built his first little works, with that same money."

After a half hour, Strong arose and gazed up at the darkening skies.

"I will make it a cold day for you, Frederick Wyman," he fiercely cried. "Thief, conspirator, utterer of forged documents, perjurer, and accessory to murder—even a robber of the game scoundrel, who killed Devereux."

"See here," he cried to his agent, "I must get into Virginia, and then out of it as soon as possible. Index and note all these papers for reference. How can I get to town quickly?"

The quick-witted detective pointed to a lone pine a half mile ahead on the road.

"You can cut across lots over to that tree. I'll run down, get a buggy and a smart horse and pick you up. What do you wish to do to-night at Virginia City?"

"Only to see that record book once more, and then, have you give the bank's lawyer a secret message. I want also a certified copy of that Devereux deed sent down

to the manager of the bank, at once. Then, you can drive me back here to Gold Hill and I'll take the morning train down to Sacramento; for a throw-off, I will go down to the city and then on the boat.

It was eleven o'clock that night, when the tired advocate laid his head on the straw pillow of an obscure miner's hotel in Gold Hill. "Somewhere in the world there is a poor child who should be the owner of three-quarters of this hidden treasure. I will find you! I will know you! Miss Hope Devereux—Miss Devereux of the Mariquita. If I could only find Hooper, for I must get a correct picture of the murdered man, the last link of the proof. Then, I could prove by inspection the death of the real Devereux. I must lead that cowardly fellow, Wyman, on to trap himself." And all the long night Waldo Strong wandered in cloud-land with the shadowy woman he sought, "Miss Devereux of the Mariquita."

It was in perfect accord with the plans resulting from his cautious visit, and following a cipher telegram, that Strong directed the manager to have his openly recognized attorneys now give him a formal written opinion, with which to face Wyman. Strong was gliding down the farm-fringed banks of the Sacramento river, while Mr. Frederick Wyman, outwardly self-possessed, faced the manager of the Anglo-Californian bank. The young millionaire was suave, alert, watchful.

"I have consulted no attorneys in regard to the rejection of my hitherto unchallenged title," remarked Wyman, "but, I simply called to frankly ask you the reason of the rejection of it by your lawyers. Their action delays a very important London transaction."

"I have no doubt," calmly said the manager, "and the reasons are so simple that I can now give them to you. I have a note, by the way, from my counsel here. Perhaps,

you can remedy the delay at once?" The manager's head was bowed over his papers, and he extracted an envelope, on which Wyman's quick eye caught the office stamp of those great legal luminaries, Messrs. Jumbo, Boardman & Harrigan. He smiled, "Ah! I see."

"First, no United States patent," the banker slowly read off, and, then adjusting his gold-rimmed eye-glasses, "Ah! yes, the Devereux deed itself. You claim from one Robert Devereux the last deed for three-quarters of the mine as recorded was only a certified copy. Such a document should either have been a duplicate original, or else the original itself. You see it's a very large transaction, Mr. Wyman," pleasantly remarked the oily manager. "We must be very conservative. Our bank here gains nothing, only business in a general way, and, we are held morally responsible for the extremest care in London."

"Is there no other alleged defect?" cried Wyman, his eyes brightening, as his heart told him the advertisements had so far, produced nothing of a formidable character against his holding. "I can easily arrange to sweep this little cloud away. First, I have the original deed, and I will record that at once, or else exhibit it to your lawyers, as they may decide. Secondly, I will at once apply for and have a United States mineral land patent obtained. If there is no notice of contest filed, then in thirty days, the granting is only a pro forma matter. There'll be no notice."

"You have never been contested in any manner, in your holding?" blandly demanded the amiable banker. "Then, my dear sir," heartily said the manager, rising. "I must say that I shall write to London, that this cloud is only a matter of a month's delay. I would proceed at once with the patent, if I were you."

"And, your attorneys," remarked Wyman, his heart leaping up in joy, "shall I call in there?"

"They will write you at once as to an inspection of the deed, but, in any case, I should record it, for my own protection. If you do not hear from me by four o'clock, send it up to Virginia City, and have it spread on the records. Our attorney there can examine it. Yes, on the whole, I would do that."

There was a queer gleam of satisfaction in the banker's eyes as Wyman disappeared. "Slick scoundrel," he murmured, "and, he was quite excited, too, for his hands trembled, as he grasped his hat and cane;" which proved that the remarks of the late Steven Berard as to Frederick Wyman's nerve weakness, were not unfounded, even after the lapse of years of prosperity. Yet, the coward lived, and, the man of iron nerves was ashes.

But Mr. Wyman was a very happy man as he sped away to send by Wells, Fargo and Co., the original forged document, to the Recorder at Virginia City. A half hour with Mr. Horace Wilder, who was accustomed to such simple formalities, enabled him to entrust to the mail, the simple papers of application for the United States mineral land patent, with the usual fees, directed to the Register of the U. S. Land office at the mountain mining city.

"I will defy the devil himself, now," he laughed, as he returned from these last formalities. "They have found out nothing, not a scrap of paper to found a contest on. It was a false alarm!" He drove gaily to the ocean beach and finished up a happy afternoon, by a little victorious dinner (not of a solitary nature) at the Cliff House, for the rosy brigade were all now anxious to make the most of the gallant bachelor, before the doors of the stately "Nob Hill" home hid him from their eyes, at least for a time.

Wyman was delightfully eased at heart, as he nodded behind the clicking heels of his thoroughbred trotters, speeding home over the jaspery roads of Golden Gate

Park. He cast his eyes down to the oval where he had first met, in a near approach, the one lovely woman of all the chase, who had so far escaped his passion's meshes. Gladys Lyndon's face returned to him in all its freshness of high-souled beauty. "Damn her cold prudishness," he sneered. "She will live to regret it," which proved in time to be a prophecy which notably failed. But Wyman was in high glee. He had cabled to the august Hiram Buford: "Only a slight delay, taking out United States patent, thirty days ends all bother. Will join you then, at once, in London." A softer daily message to Miss Minnie was "de rigueur," and his orders to his Parisian bankers submerged that waiting bride-to-be in daily "floral offerings," whose mute increase spoke of the "mad tide of love" swelling in his heart.

But one answer, he awaited with impatience. He had dispatched to Morani "to return unless needed." On his arrival at his bower of bachelor innocence, he bounded in joy, for a cablegram awaited him. Its cipher soon told the story of life's last triumph. "Found my man, settled down in villa, gentleman of leisure. Vinnie here, too. Have a daily watch kept. Shall I come?" The signature "Tony" was a confirmation. "Now, I will make a king stroke," swore Wyman, as he mused with an upward glance. "I know what I will do, and Mr. James Walter Hooper will not particularly fancy it. I will take him away from Vinnie, as if by accident, and she shall be mine yet, the keenest adviser of the whole lot." He smiled softly, as he gazed up at the floating form of the absent Venus, beaming down a promise in those passion-haunted, "half cryin' eyes." "I will make it an object to her, to come back to me," he triumphantly whispered, as he closed his eyes to dream that her clinging arms were clasped around him once more.

The single word "Come" had been flashed to Morani under the Atlantic billows before Frederick Wyman gaily awoke to the life appropriate to "Nature's Nobleman," and he softly smiled upon her pictured beauty as the "sun of Austerlitz" woke him, a conquering hero, the next morning. "I will see her soon again," he said, with a fierce light in his dark eyes.

There are moments of fatuous blindness in which the coming ruin sweeps down on us, finding us unguarded, like Belshazzar at his drunken feast! While Wyman raised the wine glass at the Cliff House and smiled into strange eyes of a professional "bit of loveliness," Waldo Strong and the bank manager sat in the gloomy California Street temple of Blackstone. Mr. Inspector Stanton was closeted with them. The faces of the three men were sternly set in that eager plan of a campaign to the death, for the hour of doom was nigh.

"I make but one condition," said Strong. "Mr. Stanton is to have absolute control of filing the notice of contest. He has my cipher, and he will have my local assistant here under his orders. You must keep Wyman here and content until I get over to London." The manager bowed.

"Here is a carte blanche letter to our London house. They will do all you ask and report to me. You can send your own cablegram to Stanton."

"Then there's nothing more, for I must spend three hours with my junior on my office directions for a two month's absence. I take the morning train," and Waldo Strong rose with a gleam of triumph in his cold, cruel eye. He said, "I will be back as soon as wheels, winds and waves will bring me."

"Spare no money," cried the banker. "It is a villainous scoundrelism from first to last."

"Stanton," cried Strong, as the banker disappeared, "Meet me and go up to Benicia, with me to-morrow, at eight, for I am nearly worn out."

"Count on me," said the sturdy official, "I wish to see that innocent blood avenged after many years.

"You will see it avenged, by the God above us," solemnly answered the lawyer.

When alone he read over again, a brief letter from London. It was carefully drawn forth from his bosom. Its arrival that afternoon, had changed his whole plan of attack, for, on his way back from court to the legal den that day he pondered over the silence of the great western public as regarded Devereux. "People drop out of sight like plummets in a dark sea, here," he sadly thought, "but somewhere on earth, you are wandering, ignorant of fortune, perhaps poor, friendless, the victim of untoward events. But, I will find you, shadowy Miss Devereux." As he spoke a drunken Irishman passed him shouting, "Trust to luck, trust to luck and stare fate in the face." He smiled. It was a good omen! "I will trust to luck," he laughed.

The very first letter on his table, was a foreign one. He noted the London postmark, and then, opened it with professional care. As he read it, he sprang to his feet, "Found at last, by God. Now, I have him," he shouted in a strange excitement. His wondering clerks lifted their heads, and one anxious one darted into the room. "Oh, bother! It's nothing," Strong shame-facedly said, as he read the note again. Thanks to Stanton, the "X. Y. Z." delivery was specially watched.

The words startled him. "Is it her own handwriting? I must go over there at once, at all hazard," he decided, for he read:

LONDON, October 20, 1875.

"To X. Y. Z.,

"P. O. Box 2901, San Francisco, California.

Sir: The only living child, the orphan daughter of Robert and Mary Devereux, can be communicated with by addressing X. Y. Z., care Ernest Thomas, Director Albert Hall, London. All proofs of her identity are here, as well as her father's and mother's letters, and pictures. They will not be parted with. Yourself or some reliable agent, can see me here. I will remain here for six months. Any letters or telegrams to the above address will be properly answered by me.

"Respectfully yours,

"ROBERT DEVEREUX'S DAUGHTER."

"Victory!" grimly cried Strong, as he hastened his head clerk to the office, with a cable message. "Coming to see you. Important property rights yours. Await me. I bring your own letter, and leave to-morrow." The connection would be made in one more day.

When he had revolved the whole subject in his mind, Strong finally said to himself: "I must at once file a notice of contest. If I can get this woman's permanent attorneyship, I will apply also for the appointment of attorney of the absent heirs of Robert Devereux, and so bring the unknown heiress on at once. Her letter bespeaks some refinement. At any rate I will have time to act, as I can block the mine transaction at the London main office. If I get that dead man's picture, then God help you, Mr. Frederick Wyman, if you force me to fight in the open. Your doom is sealed."

There were few words wasted, as Stanton wrung Strong's hands in parting at Benicia. "I'll keep your bird in sight here. Find your fairy Miss Devereux, and your fortune is made."

The lawyer started in surprise, as the train rolled away, for, with no second thought of money, his fee of the future had been so far only a cold even-handed justice meted out to the man, who, in plunging him in poverty, had robbed him of Gladys Lyndon, the vanished song bird. "Ah! It comes too late, if fortune's flood returns. I am left alone." And, speeding over the rich fruited vale of the Sacramento, he examined the last bundle of morning mail brought down to the boat by a breathless clerk.

The first letter from Mrs. Hammond brought a sad smile to his face, "I shall see her at any rate," for the intelligence that "Miss Lyndon was studying music in Paris at Mario's conservatoire," was all that diplomatic person would impart. "Let him find out the rest himself," the gay matron had said, as she sealed her letter. "I do not wish to get caught in deep water over the Diana-faced prude. Strong and Wyman can fight for her arctic smiles with this Yankee, Otis. Her bosom is a locked-up ice chest, and, she's a fool."

Mr. Tony Morani was a prey to many misgivings with regard to the final landing of the "thousand pounds," when the sudden departure of his master from London alarmed him. "By Jupiterre!" growled Monsieur Morani, "I hope he does not go to pieces, boom, ah! like the other California millionaires." Antoine Morani was puzzled as he too enjoyed his "otium cum dignitate," with the bright little Parisienne at Chiswick. He now had the daily life of the Hailey Osgoods, "down to a dot." In the easy retired semi mercantile class around, their generous entertainment, and Mr. Hailey Osgood's bonhomie, made them very popular. Tradespeople and the shop-keepers had but one word as to liberality and prompt payment.

"They are in 'Easy street' at any rate," decided Tony. He had secretly watched the happy couple. A

delightful English peachy bloom had refreshed the gloomy cheek of Vinnie Hinton. The "guise of virtue" fitted her well, and as to her form, and "outward woman" even Tony, a carping critic, pronounced her to be "just right to a hair." Not a shade of care lingered on the brows of either in their open villa life. A fair mail, of a social nature, was usually taken to the villa by the postman with whom Morani was now "solid" in the American sense. "I can't make it out," mourned Tony, "and, if I give this thing up to Wyman by letter, I may not see that thousand pounds. What is the game here?"

There were only two suspicious features in the unruffled life of the "Hailey Osgoods." Mrs. Hailey Osgood never showed Vinnie Hinton's blooming face in London. Her maid seemed to be a trusted "Abigail," and, she was absolutely proof against all the occasional blandishments of the "chere amie" who shared Morani's comfortable Chiswick exile. High pay sealed her lips. This woman was "commissionaire" in chief, for the handsome lady of the villa, and, rarest of her sex, she would not talk! None but Chiswick people ever crossed the garden lawns, and Mr. Hailey Osgood himself always was alone in his town trips, which were only broken by the Sundays.

A month of watching proved to Morani that the fugitive forger had some powerful reasons for his regular attendance at the little money broker's shop. Little business was done there, but yet there was no flavor of suspicion. A safe and a check book seemed to be the arms of the taciturn money lender, Compton. He never went to the exchanges, but his personal visits to the General Postoffice, the foreign character of his customers, and the visits of many continental gentlemen at the lodging house dressing station, gradually forced

Morani to believe "Compton" was only a stool pigeon for some desperate continental criminals. "What else can it be?" Morani demanded of his puzzled brain, for the stealthy change of route, and the slipping out of the grub "Compton" into the Chiswick butterfly "Hailey Osgood," was attended with a hundred keen bright variations in detail and the daily routes! He was an artful dodger, "Mr. Compton Hailey Osgood Hooper," and, the lady always clung to the villa.

"By God! he's a smart devil, and he ought to succeed," thought Tony one evening, as buried in his newspaper he furtively watched the military-looking "gent," from Australia. At Chiswick, Hailey Osgood was thought to be some ex-mounted policeman, who had gone in for "sheep raising," or married some rich "Sidney duck's" daughter. The valet's eyes ran over the journals, always in anxious watch. He burned to find some clue to "Compton." Some events which would justify "Hailey Osgood," a cool, wide-awake scoundrel, in so braving the English police. "He may have saved a good lump of the plunder of his Californian forgeries, and so dreams along here on the quiet, but he is all the while far inside of the danger line. What makes him take this risk?" So, Morani keenly searched the journals.

He started, and instinctively turned his eyes toward the disguised Hooper, when he read an article which roused him at last. The very heading, "Heavy Forgeries on London Banks," was enough to excite the fox-like Morani. When he had finished reading, he stole away to the stern of the boat. "I have got your little game at last, Mr. Compton," he chuckled. Lighting a cigar, he mused, "Yes, small London checks on various banks, all very skillfully raised to large sums; bills of exchange obtained from immigrants and others, most skillfully negotiated on the Con-

tinent, with endorsements of the greatest London banks; a very fine hand shown in these great swindles. Police baffled."

Mr. Antonio Morani laughed softly. He dared not mutter the word "Jim the Penman," but, his eyes gleamed in triumph, as he gazed at the easy elegance of the victim now unconsciously spotted. "I'll have Wyman's money, and, a sum equal to the Government reward, too." Morani had read the past history of Hooper in the San Francisco journals, for they had "harked back" on his old exploits. So with glee, the dapper little valet provisioned and munitioned his bright-eyed garrison, and murmured certain loving injunctions to the "Jessica" of his house, and heart, for well he knew that Wyman would now call him back at once.

It so fell out, and before the seasick Mr. Morani arrived at New York, he had discovered the reason for Wyman's pursuit of Hooper. If "truth lies at the bottom of a well," this discovery welled up while the "City of Berlin" was plunging into terrific seas, evidently trying to stand on her head, if this nautical devilment were possible. "Yes!" groaned Morani, "Hooper ran off with the luscious Vinnie Hinton. She was Wyman's good angel 'une belle ame damnée.' Better looking, better dressed, more heart, more 'go' in her than all the rest. It is 'la revanche.' Well, he shall have it, if he pays me." Morani, in singling out the Venus whose pictured beauties floated on the ceiling, in raising her as queen of light loves, far above all the women who had ever stolen light-footed up the private stair of "The Den," had only done her charms simple justice.

Gay and debonnaire, she had been always "square" to Wyman, and her quick wit, nerve, and unfailing courage had built him up. In straying into a life of reckless

gallantry, she had not lost a certain fiber of character which vivified her mad exploits under the flag of Venus. "I belong to myself, at any rate," she had often cried, with rosy lips and sparkling eyes. "I rule, and will not bend." It amused her to see, prostrate before her pretty feet, the "heavy men of the golden state." And she had struck on the sounding brass of Frederick Wyman's nature, and knew too well there was not a single golden note in his harp of life.

"Fred, your own lack of heart, your absolute lack of faith, will rob you of all friends," she had cried once, in a fit of critical "sizing him up." "You will never make a single true friend. Your lack of nerve may flurry you, and remember what I tell you, all around you they will scamper like rats, if you are in any trouble. So, my boy, play a 'safety game.' After all, it's only those who help others who have a right to run up a distress signal. But, you will go down alone, without mourners, too, if you don't look out."

The golden tide of prosperity had swept Wyman along on summer seas, and yet, as he waited for Morani's return, he missed the keen-witted Vinnie daily more and more. And in his lonely hours, the "half-cryin' eyes" looked down on him, and wakened memories which made the old passion burn again in scorching flames. She was the queen, and her vacant throne awaited her royal footstep— "Ah! so soon! Back again!"

There was a little fleck of growing cloud in the bright sunshine of Miss Lyndon's pronounced London success. Jack Otis noticed daily a graver shade on her bright brow, and a cold self-protective manner in her daily intercourse. The chilliness, however, did not reach the companion of her "architectural excursions," and her answer to Jack's solicitous inquiries only told him that the professional life

was beginning to tell upon that reserve of vital force which the stage world finally exhausts.

"I have so many engagements, and I see so many people, so many strangers. I often wish I could get away from it all," the noble woman confided to him, one evening as they wandered in the friendly shades of Hyde Park. She was now the pronounced London rage, and Otis knew that she was amassing all her savings, the golden gains of "extra appearances" in great private houses, to complete her final training for the opera stage.

"Brother Jack" had a thousand times demanded of his own heart, the reason of the unbroken silence she always guarded as to her lonely youth and her family antecedents. "If I knew! If she would only give me one word, a single one, I would beg her to link her life with mine. But I can wait" he said, for, Mr. Otis, recognizing the unsullied womanliness of her noble nature, knew that she would chose her time. "I think I would be far happier in the regular career of the opera stage," she reluctantly admitted at last. "This position is so transient, so varied in its demands," and yet, she was a "fixed star" now, and Otis had only been able by skillful maneuvering to delay her sending back the two thousand dollars to the Parisian bankers she still thought to be due her creditors.

"My poor darling," he murmured that night, and was marshaling his soft-eyed soldiery of loving words to storm the feebly defended walls of her heart, when Harriet, the faithful abigail, gave him at last the key to the secret. "If she has any secret grief, if she has trouble, I must find out," he warmly soliloquized, and he was resolved now to bear her away to the splendid old home on the Charles, if love would show her the way.

And yet, loving and solicitious now knowing her whole gentle heart, in all save the story of the past, he feared

"to put it to the touch and win or lose it all." "There has been some sadness, some overhanging gloom," he reasoned, and a thousand times he scorned the thought of any previous episode of passion. "Ah! no, the breath of life still sweeps the harp of her soul in free strains, unmingled with the higher notes of love, for, these chords were silent. The sleeping music had never been waked by the great artist hand." He was startled when the bright-eyed English maid burst out in indignation:

"It's just a shame, a cryin' shame, that's what it is, sir. That dear blessed young lady. Why sir!" and Harriet dived for her apron. "There's letters, and nosegays and baskets of flowers, and such presents; and letters with crests and big seals on 'em too. And, if you knew," her eyes glistened in anger, "the way they try to trap her, the scoundrels!"

"Who are they? Harriet," cried Otis, with a sinking heart, for now, he saw the drift of a portion of these public attentions lavished on the unprotected girl. "Why! a whole lot of the London swells. You know that idle, wicked class, sir! all kinds, and some who ought to be in better business—old married reprobates." Harriet wiped her eyes, but her left hand instinctively closed on a sovereign.

"You're a good girl, Harriet," said Jack Otis, moodily.

"Oh! sir, take her right away out of here. London's an awful place, sir." Alas! John Wayne Otis, wandering away disconsolate, saw no difference between New York, Paris and London as "awful places;" nay, even his native tri-mountain Boston, was not free of that cold deliberate woman hunt, which in all its seductive luxury and cowardly detail seems to be the one passion of the "unemployed," of the aristocracy, the plutocracy, and all those waiting cuttle-fish who can twist their slimy arms around the fair young prey.

"It's the way of the world," broke out Jack Otis, and then forgetting his Puritanism, he energetically added, "a damned bad way, too. A woman ought to have at least a chance to dwell undefiled in peace within the beautiful tenement of a clean soul, if God gives her the mind to so dwell." And he then thought of all the fair young faces which lose the light of life, of all the beautiful ones "who go down in the lost battle, borne down by the flying." "Ah! me, if these poor women only knew the path to the gateway of Pleasure was paved with the bones of those who had gone before!" Mr. Otis threw away his cigar, and went home sadly. "It would not make any difference," he mourned "neither would they be persuaded, if one rose from the dead, for, ever since the world began the unequal fight goes on, and the soft white bosom of woman is still unarmed, against 'Her Dearest Foe.'"

A little flattery, a little rose wreathed wine, a few jewels, a little brief hour of passion's devil dance, a little heartbreak, a little lonely grave, a little moral!

Gladys turned queenly eyes on him that night, in the starlight, as they walked home together.

"Yes, there is trouble always," she softly replied, "and insult more or less covert, and continual cowardly intrusion. I fancy it is a sort of reflected vanity, this chase after a strange face seen under the mocking footlights of the stage, a vain desire to have and to hold, for a passing time of mere brutal fancy."

"Is there no way out?" huskily cried Jack; "no way to limit this wretched brutality?"

"I fear not, Brother Jack," with a hopeless voice, the girl frankly said. "It is the reverse of the medal! I can see no protection, except the absolute retirement of private life, and, what woman is safe even there? But, here we are," she sighed, and with a throbbing heart, the beautiful singer dismissed her undeclared lover at the door.

Long after she had loosened her golden hair, and stole to the window, in a lonely reverie, she saw a lithe, manly form pacing the brick pathway opposite. A gleam of red fire showed that Mr. John Wayne Otis was pondering over a little social problem, which had this evening aroused a particular interest in his manly bosom. Architecture of a local nature had suddenly lost all its charms, and, he finished his last castle in Spain, with a few sweeping masterly touches. "I may not be worthy of her," he mused, as he took one last fond look at her windows, "but, God bless her! I have, at any rate, a safe nest for that dear song bird. I will not always let her drift here, alone and unprotected," he decided, and, he only sought a fitting time for the application of that sterling old proverb, "Man proposes."

His tender heart was humbled and chastened by the girl's dignified reserve, the proud isolation of her silence as to her youth, and the patience of her new sorrow. He little knew how weak and fond her woman's heart was, trembling there behind the silken armor, for dear eyes he loved, followed his retreating form, unseen that night, and Hope Devereux pressed a slender white hand upon a womanly bosom, rising and falling in the sweet, sad unrest of love.

Her very last word, when murmured that night, was, "Jack, if you only knew all, if you only knew all," for in her heart of hearts, she would be worthy of him, and the thought of that proud, lonely mother, seated in the classic old home at Cambridge thrilled her with unrest. "I will not bring her pain, a pauper orphan," she cried, through her lonely tears.

A week later Jack Otis escorted Gladys Lyndon to Chiswick. An afternoon concert and reception, gave Mrs. Hailey Osgood an opportunity to have a nearer view of the woman who had so enslaved Fred Wyman. It was

the only occasion, on which Miss Lyndon had gone out of the list of the great houses. The Anglo-American colony, headed by Mrs. Buford, was the theater of her most recent triumphs, and Director Thomas narrowly inspected all the town offers.

"It's a good idea, my boy, for you to escort Miss Lyndon there," he said. "These Australians are very queer fish sometimes."

When the singer had won the hearts of the hundred thronging Mrs. Hailey Osgood's drawing rooms, when the throng had all departed, Miss Lyndon and her escort, remained to dine en famille, and then go home on the unromantic yet storied waters of the Thames.

Mr. Jack Otis was conscious of some hidden purpose, for the hostess, superb in her robes, blazing with Mr. Frederick Wyman's diamonds, exhausted all the womanly arts to draw Miss Lyndon out upon the subject of her early career.

Vinnie Hinton bit her lips behind the filmy lace handkerchief in her jeweled hand. "Sly! Sly! You are either a very sly sister, a mighty keen one, or else a baby-faced goose, an innocent!" and, the keen adventuress wondered in her mind if Otis was an eligible "parti," or, only "the man of the hour." The topics of public life, a stage career and kindred matters, busied the ladies while Jack Otis was astounded at the remarkable denseness of Mr. Hailey Osgood on Australian matters. Otis had in his world wanderings thoroughly "done" Australia.

As he returned from a long game of billiards he remarked to himself: "This easy, good-natured chap is either a natural fool, or, has left some little record in Australia of a local nature, which bothers him."

Jack Otis, gazing on the beautiful hostess, whose dash and fire electrified him, murmured: "I suppose it's a case of

some other man's wife, or some such little social irregularity. Yes, that is what he declines to localize his old Bushranger days for." As for money, a glance at the splendidly appointed house proved that all ran on golden wheels. "They are all very rich," he said.

Mrs. Hailey Osgood was not disposed at all to lose the sudden acquaintance of Miss Gladys Lyndon. In laughing banter, she pledged her visitors to accept of another Sunday dinner and outing on the Thames.

"I shall have some garden parties later, and I count upon you as a friend, you must have a life of your own outside of the dreamland of song. And you, must come too, Mr. Otis. Men are the pawns we must have in our little social games. In all our bright plumage, we need you as our background, for you we dress, for you we drill in society's parade, for you we spread our feeble nets, for," she laughed, "we are, after all, only what you make us." There seems to be a defective quantity somewhere in womanhood, for never yet was there the woman whose life was not rounded out and made integral in its happy completeness by some one man, whom fate had doomed to be her mate. "Yes, we do need your tyrant sex. We wear your chains!" and she gaily shook Fred Wyman's diamond bracelets, at her wondering-eyed lord, Mr. Hailey Osgood.

He was mute as she declaimed.

"Look here, Vinnie, what the devil's your little game?" said Hooper as his "alleged wife" and himself strolled back over the lawn in the soft starlight.

"Jim," earnestly said Vinnie, "there's the one danger signal for us in London. That's the woman Mr. Fred Wyman went dead crazy on in the last days out there in Frisco, you know. She's a deal too good for that cold schemer. He tried to gather her into his fold." A danger-

ous light gleamed now in her eyes. "Now! If he ever comes to London, he will haunt this girl's very footsteps, and I wish to keep in touch with her. It will give us a fair warning, a chance to clear out. Do you know, Jimmie," she said fondly and anxiously, "sometimes I don't feel too sure here, you know. It's just too great a streak of luck to last, for," she sadly said, "luck turns always at last." She shivered with a sudden chill, and went in to the shelter of the home which was only a comfortable sham.

She dared not tell Hooper that she furtively purchased all the San Francisco papers, and that she knew that "nobleman of Nature," Mr. Frederick Wyman, would soon come to London to claim a millionaire bride in a few months.

"Poor old Jim," she sighed in the safety of her own "sanctum sanctorum." "He's smart enough in his way, Jim the Penman, but if he has a drop too much, then 'the days of Aranjuez are over,' and, we are lost. Wyman will also hound down this pretty girl, but in vain. She is dead square," decisively said Vinnie, "and I hope she will not be sucked down in the whirl, for she is too good to go my way," the vivacious Mrs. Hailey Osgood remarked with a last sigh.

The danger of Wyman's visit to London returned again to annoy her. "After all," she finally decided "Wyman won't dare go out of his way to hurt either of us. He is a coward, and yet—and yet—coward curs snap!" she sadly finished.

For once, Vinnie Hinton was "all abroad" in her calculations, for, at that very moment, in San Francisco, Mr. Wyman had achieved the crowning sneaking triumph of his low life. The arrival of Morani, and the prompt "crossing" of that ingenuous fellow's palm to an unheard of extent, gave the disturbed speculator the means of a

groveling revenge. "That will seal his lips forever," he cried, as he concluded the dispatching of a full anonymous letter denouncing Hooper to the authorities of Scotland Yard. It was intrusted to Wells, Fargo and Co.'s reliable express, and every detail of Mr. Hailey Osgood Compton Hooper's life and career was set forth, with a neat added theory as to his being the wonderful penman of the great international London forgeries. A picture of the most accomplished scribe, in his palmy days of brokerage, accompanied the fatal packet. The writer rubbed his jeweled hands in glee, as he winked at Vinnie's overhanging charms.

"I am even with you, now!" grimly remarked Wyman, "and, I'll let the iron trap drop on you. Tony can judiciously reconduct the tempting Vinnie, to the only man who fully appreciates her." "Nature's nobleman" then gazed admiringly at himself in the glass, and, the picture on the ceiling took on a new loveliness, that of the coming queen.

For, the very walls of the "den" spoke of the vanished days, and her springing footstep echoed once more in the waiting heart of the man who had just merely given over to a life-long transporation, the man whom Vinnie Hinton steadfastly loved with all his faults, for, he was hers alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Hailey Osgood's Garden Party.

Jack Otis found the pursuit of his "architectural investigations" a hopeless task in the first few days after Harriet's disclosures. On three separate occasions, he adorned himself "in Tyrian purple," and also bestowed an unwonted care upon his personal appearance. The vain hope that this formal "toilet of the condemned," would bring him a courage, derived from these unusual splendors, faded alas! away in a cold self-depreciation. It was to him the ordeal of his life to approach the silent outworks of that feebly-guarded fortress, a loving woman's heart, for, it was the one woman of the world for him, his lovely tyrant.

Otis did not realize the isolation of the woman he loved. She distinctly distrusted Mrs. Milly Hammond, whose growing influence over General Buford led her to become now a familiar feature of all the open marts of swell London in that magnate's company. "It was a time of roses" for them, for Mrs. Buford and Miss Minnie were both busily engaged in arranging their new London establishment.

"Let us make hay while the sun shines," Buford gaily whispered to Milly, with directness, if not with delicacy. "I may be obliged soon to return to California, but, thank God, you can go on with me, but, very discreetly." Whereat, the emboldened Milly only laughed and hummed, "'Tis you, nor I, nor nobody cares."

"Do you know, 'Old Reliable,'" she laughed, "other

people have their own little rackets. The whole world is engaged now in a sort of hide-and-go-seek 'game.' At least, it seems so to me, a casual onlooker;" for, the velvet-eyed woman had recognized a number of cases in her voyage where the threads of life were most queerly twisted. So she happily sang "A waiting for a partner! A waiting for a partner."

It suited her own "little game," to drift homewards under the lee of that portentous financial "battleship," General Hiram Buford. "He is a stayer, this old boy, a rock, a very rock, whose mighty shade is very pleasant." And so, she found it! He was a cooling shelter of grateful rest, "in the arid desert of Phryne's life where all was parched and hot."

Miss Lyndon, whose health and spirits faded visibly under the unwonted strain of ambition, hard work, her stage annoyances, and a vague unrest, became daily a more and more white-faced Marguerite, whose brows were shaded with an overmastering anxiety. She had neither friend nor confidant. In the indignant recoil of her attacked privacy, she distrusted all men and all women, save only Jack Otis.

Ernest Thomas and his strictly British family were all engrossed in their own family cares, and the girl shone out a star, lofty, silent, alone. It was a matter which caused the "lifting of eyebrows" at the clubs and in certain gay circles that the great concertist so sternly "sported the oak."

"D'ye see?" said Lord Damfoolic, a gay young unemployed peer to another "of that ilk," "there's an American chap, rather a decent fellow by the way, Jack Otis, who makes the inside running there. He's a kind of First Attaché, and I fancy, is the coming man." And so, Damfoolie yawned over a B. and S. and definitely cast

the handkerchief of selection in other and far easier directions. "For, by Jove, d'ye know," said he, "this is a rare one. Neither flowers nor presents ever seem to make their way to her, and, I don't believe a Richmond dinner or a private wine supper would convey any idea to her classic mind. Not a bit! It's a case of 'No Thoroughfare.'" And, he heaved a sigh, a giant sigh.

While Ernest Thomas, always sober and captious, could find no fault with Mr. Jack Otis' attention, while he guarded the professional life of Miss Lyndon with a real fatherly care, the clear-eyed impressario felt that his hold upon Miss Lyndon was but transient. His own verdict was summed up with a sigh, "God bless her! She's a rare nice girl, and fit for something better than the hunted life path of a popular idol. What a wife she would make, for the right man." Ah! Blind Bartimeus! The "right man" was already "on deck."

An unusual rift in the cloud, in the way of an inspiring morning, gave the long-needed key-note to Jack Otis. "I will arise and go forth, and face the music to-day," he cried in a defiant, manly spirit. He had tried for several weeks to vary the lonely life of the girl. One Chiswick Sunday had caused him, (keen-eyed enough as regarded others) to see a growing desire on the part of Mrs. Hailey Osgood to creep into very warm and close relations with the singer, for flowers, baskets of fruit, game and sundry other offerings were continued reminders of Mrs. Osgood's generosity and good memory. Otis had also made himself a committee of supply; books, nosegays, little trifles, journals, the bright American trifles of daily life, all these, he purveyed in a secret tenderness, and afoot on the prosaic banks of the Thames, in the shade of all the pleasant breathing places of London, he tried to lead the girl out of her growing seriousness.

Jack had arranged a very neat burst of lover-like eloquence, and was rehearsing it for the last time, when a note interrupted this golden pyramid building. It was a request for him to favor Miss Lyndon with an immediate call, upon a matter of great importance. The winged Mecury was not swifter than the love-awakened Bostonian who, before he reached the royal presence of the queen of his heart, was duly warned by the anxious Harriet. The simple girl wanted to see the end of love's sweet story, this living serial, under her own eyes.

"Miss Lyndon has had a telegram this morning, and is wrought up a good deal, sir. Good luck to you, for a bright-hearted young gentleman," murmured Harriet, as her plump hand sought her pocket receptacle of Jack Otis sudden largesse. These were offerings at the shrine of roguish Dan Cupid.

Miss Lyndon was pacing her salon, in agitated expectation, when Jack entered. His first glance at her sweet face dispelled his previously fixed intention "to attempt the grand coup."

For, frankly holding out both her hands, she cried, "I am so glad that you are here, now you are the only one whom I can trust. I wish your aid, your serious advice in a vitally important matter."

"There is a gentleman coming from America who has arrived last night at Liverpool. I have received a telegram that he reaches London to-night, and, he asks me to fix an hour for an early interview to-morrow. I do not know the person. I wish, therefore, some one to be present as my witness, as my adviser, perhaps. I cannot ask Mr. Thomas, especially as this business might change all my professional plans. Can I count upon you?"

The Bostonian's heart froze within him. "Most certainly," he said with a vain attempt at cheerfulness.

"That comes of the farce of the 'brother' business," he gloomily reflected. "I am now too late and I might have spoken in time."

"I can give you all my time to-morrow," he very glumly said. "Shall I call on the gentleman and arrange for an interview? Where will it occur, here?"

"I do not know," she doubtfully said. "I have telegraphed to the address of the gentleman's banker, and I neither know his name nor his hotel. I wish to advise on that very matter with you, first. Any other place in London would be suitable, but not here, not here, or where the Thomas family would know. I do not wish this person either to know where I live or who you are. Now, where would be a suitable place for such an interview?" she smiled brightly up at him in her implicit trust in the genius of Brother Jack.

The Bostonian passed his hand dreamily over his brow. "Oh! yes! I see," he stammered. "A person whom you do not know. Must not know either of us. I should say a strange sort of business meeting. He has telegraphed you, of course he knows your name?"

Otis was astounded, as Gladys smiled and said triumphantly, "Not at all. The message was sent to 'X. Y. Z.,' and he must not meet Mr. Thomas, who knows so far nothing of this business."

The puzzled Bostonian dropped his saddened eyes. "It would be as well to have such an interview at a lawyer's office or a bank."

"Precisely what I wish to avoid," smiled Gladys, who now secretly enjoyed Brother Jack's crestfallen humiliation. A rosy little devil in her heart was teasing him. "It is a personal matter and relates only to myself," she vivaciously continued.

"If you could give me any idea of the nature of

the business," Otis gloomily remarked, rising and pacing the room. His funereal manner moved her to secret laughter. The witch! He stole furtive glances at her sweet face in a distant mirror, and was singularly near entrapping the woman he idolized, in one rash fleeting glance of loving tenderness. Alas! for the opacity of the man, whose foot was lingering on the portal of his longed for paradise.

He could not read the hidden lesson of her sweetly shining eyes, the rapture of that loving, yearning bosom, which was now stirred with thoughts of him alone. In the supreme trial of her life, "forgetful of her sorrow, unmindful of her pain," she turned with all a fond woman's confidence to the one man she cherished, a chosen king to rule in her fluttering heart, and, yet, a feeling that she would not that he should steal upon her secret too soon, "her timid words of maiden welcome" had chilled his heart.

She knew well that he loved her. Miss Lyndon had long since fathomed the guilty secret of the transfer of his "architectural researches" from gay Paris to sober London. "Brother Jack" was so anxious not to crush the tender blossom of a love which had stolen unseen into the growing light of their lonely lives, that he feared to cull it. And yet, in his sudden alarm his cheeks betrayed the rush of rapture her coming brought to him.

"I can tell you all later, but not until we have finished this strange business, and that depends, too, so largely upon you," Miss Lyndon smiled, "for I don't know anything about it yet myself. Neither the man have I seen, nor do I know the precise nature of his business. All I only do know is, that it is all important to me, to my future life. I have some valuable papers which I cannot allow to leave my possession, and only in your presence, will I exhibit

them to this stranger, or allow him to take them away for examination, but only in your presence, not to be out of your sight for a single moment. I cannot trust any one but you, in London, and I need a friend now. I have only you in the world. I am alone," she softly sighed. The tell-tale blood leaped to Jack Otis' bronzed cheeks. His heart was thrilled with that infinite surging tide of love whose sweetness brings the most exquisite pain.

"I will do what you wish. I will guard your trust, with my life." Their eyes met, and her hand in some strange way, had stolen into his browned palm. The mighty oarsman did not know that he almost crushed that slender hand as he said, for their dreaming eyes had met:

"Now, to arrange at once for the meeting. Name tomorrow at three o'clock, say in the parlors of my own lodging-house. You can come there with your maid, and my good landlady will give up to you the separate parlor, and I, will await the gentleman in the front room, so there will be no chance either for him to get away or for you to be surprised. I can follow him too, and see where his haunts are."

The two young heads were dangerously near each other several times, as Brother Jack concocted a telegram which conveyed the required information.

The nervous haste with which Otis escaped to send the message himself, was due to a sudden feeling of manly generosity which forbade him to force himself upon the confidence of the beautiful orphan. But, the stars were shining in his ardent soul; her voice was singing in his heart, as he hastened away to the telegraph office! The pressure of her trembling hand, the loving glances of her beautiful downcast eyes into which a strange, sweet light had stolen, told the unselfish lover that the Rose of Life's sweet mystery was slowly unfolding in the guarded temple of her fond womanly heart.

They were drifting dangerously near, and the recording angel was on watch, with laughing eyes, looking at Otis' overcrowded columns. "More lover's fibs," he smiled, and waited!

"It's a clear, cool-headed young woman whom I have to deal with," mused Waldo Strong, as he hurried out of the head office of the Anglo-Californian that afternoon. He had fortunately been able to catch the ear of the "great mogul" of the Anglo bank, for a few moments. Driving from St. Pancras station, he obtained all his telegrams and letters.

The "head manager," calling in a grave junior, said: "Mr. Morton, Barrister Strong has the absolute confidence of our San Francisco house. You are to do everything he wishes, reporting only viva voce to me alone. He wishes to be put in communication with Scotland Yard, as he has a 'confidential London inquiry.' Now, give him your time and every facility."

The travel-jaded lawyer was overjoyed as he drove back to "Morleys," to open a brief note from Mrs. Hammond giving him her London address. A sudden flush of hope reddened his cheek. "I shall perhaps meet Gladys Lyndon! At any rate, I will know all the details of her life. If I can find time I shall go over to Paris, but first to run down my trump card, Mr. Hooper. The X. Y. Z. appointment at three will give me time to get the Scotland Yard detectives at work to-morrow."

He chafed in vain suspense, for three hours that night, in the corridors of Mrs. Hammond's hotel, until that lady returned, laughing with the lingering memories of a happy theater supper, which she had vastly enjoyed under the escort of General Hiram Buford. The two men exchanged greetings of surprise, as they met at the lift.

With a quick motion, she signaled to Strong, her dainty

finger on her rosy lips. "I shall be at home to-morrow evening," she whispered, under her breath. "Come at eight," and so, the baffled lawyer returned to his hotel.

It was a little bit of social diplomacy on the part of the quick-witted woman who weighed the two men in the financial balance, and dared not offend the experienced Buford.

"Strong has some important business of my husband's in his hands," murmured Milly, "and, as he makes a short stay, wished to get some signatures and papers from me."

The doubtful Hiram swallowed this ghost story. "I'll keep a mighty close look out on that lawyer chap," he glowered. General Buford was a stern monopolist!

A morning at Scotland Yard and the bank, prepared Waldo Strong in very good humor for the business of the afternoon.

When he had finished his story as regarded Mr. James W[illegible]ter Hooper, the chief detective said with a quiet smile, "I am not allowed, Counselor, to tell you what I know, but the credentials you have from the Anglo bank, warrant me in telling you that in a week you shall have an opportunity to speak at your leisure with your man." The grim irony touched the lawyer.

"Then, you know where he is?" Strong eagerly cried.

"Ask me nothing now," the good-humored official said. "Come back here in a week. On condition that you do not mention this man's name to a living being till then, I will show him to you." And, he made a motion illustrative of the snapping of the "Queen's jewelry" on two wrists.

"I understand," the joyful lawyer said, as he gave his pledge as an advocate.

"It is a very grave and quiet matter and you will know all later," the chief inspector remarked, "for your additional information has largely aided me in solving one misty point. I am your debtor, sir."

"One stroke of good fortune! Now, for the crisis of my life," mused Waldo Strong, as he deliberately proceeded to the rendezvous with X. Y. Z. His professional caution caused him to walk a dozen times past the house before he pulled the well-polished bell handle, the slavey's pride.

His bank detective had also reconnoitered that very morning. "Bless you, sir, all square there. One of the most respectable London apartment houses; all as regular as can be. A very nice class of people always there. No shady parties."

Waldo Strong was confronted at the door by a dapper little man, Mr. Jack Otis' lightning English "gentleman's man."

"Mr. X. Y. Z. to see Miss X. Y. Z."

"Yes sir! This way! Front parlors, sir," and the cautious lawyer soon stood open-eyed and hat in hand in the presence of Mr. Jack Otis.

"Will you be seated, sir," cordially said Jack, who had at once, sized up the respectable stranger. "A cool head, a sharp legal file, a man who thoroughly knows his business," thought Jack.

"Ah! an American, some go-between," was Strong's instant judgment.

"I fully represent the young lady you wish to see," remarked Otis quietly, "and, she has requested me to be present at your interview," Jack continued gravely. "As she is an orphan and I am at present, her only adviser, I will remain."

"I would prefer to have the young lady state so herself," said Strong. "There is no reason, however, that we should not proceed at once to business."

"I have come from a far country to transact this affair as rapidly as possible. I will not delay you, Mr. X. Y. Z.," smiled Jack Otis. "Will you kindly show me what credentials you have with you from the young lady."

"I have both your San Francisco cablegrams, and Liverpool dispatches."

"You should have her letter, and some dispatches also."

"Here they are!" briskly said the lawyer, and, the two puzzled men examined the papers mutually exchanged. The word "Correct," was a simultaneous exclamation.

"I will bring the young lady in, now," said Otis, "premising that I am to be present on her behalf, and to control in my own keeping all documents which she exhibits, which articles, will not for the present be parted with."

"That's perfectly fair," answered Strong, whose nerve tension of months of dreaming was maddening. His enemy was almost within the prison gates yawning for him now.

Jack Otis lightly swept back the sliding doors, and led the woman he loved out into the light of the front drawing room.

The counselor had affected to gaze on the cream-colored dullness of the narrow street vista, as he wondered what manner of woman Miss Devereux might be. He slowly turned as the doors slid apart. Dropping his hat and a bundle of papers, he then cried with a shout of surprise, "Miss Lyndon, Gladys Lyndon! My God! Why are you here? What do you here?"

Jack Otis was standing between them, his eyes resting eagerly on the face of his beloved, now marble in its pallor. A thousand mad conjectures thronged his brain!

The splendid eyes sought his as the girl timidly said: "Mr. Strong, I am X. Y. Z."

The lawyer sprang to her side, and grasped her two hands, trembling in a wild excitement.

"And, your name is?"

Gladys fixed her eyes full on Jack Otis, as she gently released her slender hands.

"I am Hope Devereux, the only child of Robert and Mary Devereux," she said, with a proudly uplifted brow.

Otis started and sprang to her side.

"And, your father was the owner of three-quarters of the Mariquita mine at Virginia City."

The gates of the dim past were slowly swinging back.

"He was," faltered Gladys, who had now sunk into a chair and covered her eyes with her hands. "I have his letters up to the very week of his death, for all we knew, before my mother's death, was that he had been foully murdered by a ruffian, at Willows Cross Roads, on his way home to us."

"And, he never sold it—the Mariquita—to your knowledge?" the lawyer cried, note-book in hand.

"His very last letter states that he was then negotiating for the sale of his two-thirds to a rich rancher, named Holman, for a very large sum of money, as both he and his partner were penniless."

"What is the purpose of all this, sir?" demanded Otis, who now saw the form of his beloved beginning to droop in a sudden weakness. The agitation swept her soul in storm!

"If what you say is true," Strong faltered, still amazed, "then, you are now a millionairess in your own right. Miss Devereux of the Mariquita, otherwise known as the 'Lone Star,' and, stolen from you by Frederick Wyman."

One gasping sigh, and it was Jack Otis's strong arms which raised the falling form of the girl who had tried to spring to her feet.

He fiercely shook Strong off, and loudly cried "Harriet!"

The good-humored face of the abigail paled in a sudden horror, as Jack Otis bore the senseless girl to a divan.

"Call Mrs. Quimby here! Do all you can. Quick!

quick!" he cried, and then bidding his man bring the nearest doctor, he rejoined the still astonished Mr. Waldo Strong in the front parlor.

Jack Otis was surprised at the changed face he saw as the lawyer raised his bowed head, for the tidings of her good fortune, had also conveyed to the champion of her rights in one brief moment the knowledge that he was to be a wanderer henceforth in life, haunted only by hopes that failed, and evermore sadly alone, for this bright-browed young stranger was the man she loved!

There was no response by the Californian, when Otis said slowly. "This is indeed a strange, very strange story. You know the responsibility of such representations I presume, sir?"

The lawyer bowed his head again in a grave silence.

But, when Gladys Lyndon came forth, pale and trembling to be met by both the excited men, the lawyer had found fitting words at length. "It shall be the one crowning happiness of my life that I brought to you, the glad news of your splendid inheritance. It will be the first duty of my life to restore it intact to you, and also, to punish the thief who now stands as a dark shadow behind the murder of your father. Wyman is a consummate villain!"

Hope Devereux silently placed the two men's hands in each others. Through her happy tears she smiled. "This is the one man here who has befriended me in my very darkest days, Mr. John Otis," she said, awkwardly enough, for the word "Jack" was trembling on her lips. A peculiar smile flitted over the lawyer's face as she added: "He is the only one on earth whom I trust, but you. Mr. Waldo Strong, counselor at law of San Francisco," she murmured, as she turned again to her wondering comrade of the interrupted "architectural explorations." "It all seems so strange."

Jack Otis suddenly bethought him the star of the Albert Hall was obliged to sing on that very evening. "I presume, Mr. Strong, you can briefly tell Miss Lyndon," he smiled, "what practical steps you would inaugurate?"

"You must not forget that you sing to-night," he meaningly said, with a glance at the newly born Hope Devereux.

In a few words Strong learned of all the surroundings of Miss Lyndon. He had already formulated his whole plan. "You must simply be 'Miss Gladys Lyndon' here until I release you," he said. "I presume you will allow me to bring Mr. Frederick Wyman at once to bay. After you are made administratix of your father's estate, you can then, choose a permanent legal adviser. It would be a too long story to tell what led me to the discovery of Wyman's vile rascality. Your own past life does not come in question. All I wish to do, is to see enough of your legal proofs to establish, beyond a doubt, that you are Robert Devereux's only heir and only daughter. I wish also the names of any living witness who knew you all three together alive."

"There is but one person, a widow, but happily now living in San Francisco," said Miss Hope Devereux, her eyes filling with tears.

"Good!" cried Strong, "Now, I want the picture you wrote you had, and the papers. Let me simply glance at them here? The next steps are all easy enough. I cable to my Virginia City legal associate to apply openly for letters of administration on your father's estate, in your own name; also instantly, to file a contest in your name in the matter of the issuance of a U. S. patent for the 'Lone Star' mine, once the 'Mariquita,' to the robber Wyman. We have nearly thirty days to act in each matter. I will

thus be back in San Francisco ready to act and verify the proofs. We will take the mine at once out of Wyman's hands, and his own one-quarter, will pay the legal expenses, and all that he has used in unpaid back profits. The Mariquita has doubled in value in three months! All you have to do is to authorize me to act so far as your attorney."

"But, I have no money to fight this desperate man with," murmured Hope Devereux.

"I have! Plenty of it, too! and at your service!" in a ringing voice, cried Mr. John Wayne Otis enthusiastically forgetting himself, as he sprung to his feet. "Fight the mean rascal out at once, Mr. Strong," he cried. "Telegraph at once your notice of contest, and the probate application orders. Then, to-morrow, shall we all meet here at say ten o'clock? for, Gladys you need rest," he said, and their eyes met in a strange confusion.

Otis was in the full swing of a strange new-born sense of power, for when he had vigorously referred to the money backing, a little hand, stole into his, and it seemed to him as if an angel near him had softly whispered, "Jack." It was, in fact, an involuntary comment of Miss Hope Devereux, who, at that particular moment, could not see her gallant young backer standing there, proud and thrilled, for very happy tears had blinded her gentle eyes!

It was a sweet surrender!

"We must not be seen by any Californians here, in our apparent business conference. "Now, remember," said Strong. You are positively still only Gladys Lyndon, to all."

"I can keep a secret," smiled Miss Lyndon, "even Mr.—"

"Jack," promptly interpolated Otis, as she hesitated.

"Even Mr. Jack," she said with a wondrous sr
"does not yet, know the story of my early life," l
was an infinite promise to him in her tender smile.

"Good!" said Strong. "Now I will bring Mrs Hammond down to hear you sing to-night at the hall. It will be very natural that I should also call on you. The rest is easy enough. I will, if you allow me, take these letters, and the pictures away and have good negatives of all of them taken, this very afternoon. Then they will be safe beyond accident. I will study all the originals, and restore all to you to-morrow morning. They must at once go into a bank vault for safe keeping. They are your little deeds of fortune. A million is a great stake."

The girl was wrapped in a dream mist. "Is it possible! Is it possible," she cried, "I am so rich? So needlessly rich;" and a voice, soft as the falling dews of night whispered: "My poor darling mother! My dear father."

The men's eyes met in a mute compassion!

"I will hasten away, send the dispatches and get to work." He then took Hope Devereux's hand in his. "May God bless you in all your good fortune," he simply said.

"You have implicit confidence, Mr. Strong," the startled heiress replied, with a smile, which recalled to him days when he wove dreams of a future, now fled forever. "Alas! the smile that blessed one lover's heart, has also broken many more," in other days than our later Bonanza days, but, a seal was placed upon the stone rolled against the tomb in Waldo Strong's heart. "I will be her friend for life," he murmured. He might have said, her slave, her bondman of old.

Most strangely, his departure left Hope Devereux, shame-faced and blushing, standing silent there, before her lover. With the speed of a swift Camilla, she "fell back in good order" upon the anxious Harriet.

And so, it came to pass that Mr. John Wayne Otis, whose "heart circulation" was very strangely affected, only submissively, murmured a trifling question as the god-

dess reappeared. "Shall I call a carriage? It is better, and, you need immediate rest," and thus, under the watchful brown eyes of Harriet, the two hearts so drawn to each other were still wary and watchful of an all too patent double secret.

Jack already saw a line of breakers foaming ahead! His own pride and reserve now tied his halting tongue, but the sweet wonder in their eyes, had betrayed them both.

"I presume you will come to the hall as usual," faltered Gladys.

"If you think best," humbly said Otis.

"I do think best," the glowing beauty softly said, as they alighted. She turned upon him the sweetest face in the world, glowing with a new happiness. "I must talk to you to-night and I still need your advice." She paused on the threshold of her home, and then gave him her hand. "Good-bye," she murmured, "Jack!" and, the sudden eclipse of her beauty left him standing there, alone, in a speechless delight!

But before nine o'clock that evening, the precise hour at which he would gaze again on that beloved face, the Bostonian felt that the sudden unequality to be of wealth lifted her now far beyond him! "Yes," he said gloomily after pacing his rooms. "It is all over." He had stolen into the lonely drawing-room, and kissed the very place where her head had rested on the divan. His strong arms were tingling with the contact of that dear and beloved helpless form, which fate had so strangely made a burden of delight to him. "If I were only alone with her, out at sea, only we two, and the stars hanging above us there!" And so, he ran into the realms of cloudland and fancy, dreaming that he was sailing off shore again with her, sailing on forever on an unknown sea, far out of sight of any land, to the soft music of their own beating hearts:

OFF SHORE.

Around, a dark and starless sea,
Throbs in its wind swept minor strain:
The rising gale sings in the sail,
In varying tones, that ring again.

The vault unflecked by silvery star,
Domes high above! Ah! Lost we are,
Beyond all thralls of earthly calls!
The breaking surge at intervals,

Throws phosphor sparks of gold on high!
Here, with no lingering cares hard by,
We drift! Sweep on! Oh Happy sea!
My love is nestling near to me.

The land we knew is lost to view,
There's not one gleaming spark in sight,
Our heart throbs, golden moments note,
As, shadowed, in the night we float!

Sing on! Wild Winds! Sing in my heart!
Ah! Love! For never shall we part,
But sail on life's o'ershadowed main,
Till love shall waft us, "Home again."

For our love knows nor bounds, nor lines,
No stretch of Time, nor world's confines,
The heart which throbs alone for me,
Is mine—to all eternity.

Waldo Strong was composed and grave-faced as he sat down to rest in his rooms at Morley's that afternoon. He had found a note from the Chief Inspector at Scotland Yard, waiting in his rooms. "Don't leave town, may want you now at any moment; will send for you." This brought a new thrill of triumph to his heart.

He had sent an appropriate offering of flowers to Mrs. Hammond, with a request for her kindly presence at the concert under his escort. His photographic labors were all over.

Sick at heart, he threw himself in a chair, and reviewed

the situation. He sat there until he had smothered down the rising sobs of his saddened heart. "To bring this vast fortune to her very feet, to see her happy, so happy, in another's arms. It is the crucifixion of my heart."

One new idea haunted him. "I will closely watch Mrs. Hammond. She has tried to throw this pure girl defenceless under the influence of this robber, sneak, and second-hand murderer. Did she know?" So, he was very wary when Mrs. Hammond poured all her praises of Gladys into his ear that night, when the thunders of applause shook the crowded house. He was naturally bound in duty to escort the velvet-eyed tourist to Miss Lyndon's waiting-room to pour out once more her renewed enthusiasm.

"It brings us all, openly on the scene, at any rate!" he murmured, as he left the ladies together for a few minutes.

In the lobby, he stumbled over that full-blown Nevada giant, Andrew Bowen, Esq. To be dragged away for a "drink," was the penalty paid for his recognition. After he had learned of Bowen's hurried run over, on a daring mining scheme, a sudden thought animated the lawyer.

"By the way, Mr. Bowen," he said, "whatever became of Robert Devereux, your old Virginia City friend?"

"Blest if I can tell!" said Bowen, setting down the glass, "I've often asked Wyman. He, too, has lost sight of him."

"Does that look like him?" quickly said Strong, handing him the picture given to him by Hope Devereux.

The florid Nevada capitalist said coolly "Certainly! It is Bob Devereux, one in a thousand, certainly, a good picture, too! His very self, but he was pulled down when he left us. This picture shows him in good condition. But, still any man who ever knew him in Virginia City would swear flat on that picture. That's him! Where

did you get it?" cried Bowen, turning his questioning eyes on Strong.

"That's the picture of a man who was murdered at Willow Cross Roads in 1864, not two months after he left you, by that fiend, Steve Berard, the noted gambler."

"I don't believe a damned word of it," roared out Bowen, greatly astonished. "Why Wyman was Berard's partner, and I knew them both very well then, neither ever mentioned it to me. I ought to know. I fired, myself, one of a dozen shots that killed poor Steve and his blooded racer in the '101' uprising. And, I've always been mighty sorry, too."

"I can bring you a man of the highest character in San Francisco, Mr. Bowen," said Strong, solemnly, "who saw Steve Berard shoot down this unarmed man. And, I know also, where his grave is now, on Holman's Ranch."

Bowen was paralyzed.

"Well! If he was killed on Holman's Ranch then there was some bloody rascality in it. Holman was an infernal old cut-throat and, 'Jim Brown, the murderer,' always hung out there. I'm blessed if Wyman, too, is not a mighty close-mouthed devil. He never whispered Devereux's death to me; and so, he has known it all these years?"

"He must have," coolly said Strong, pocketing the picture.

"See here, Strong," anxiously said the rough diamond, "Come and see me at the Hotel Langham. I'm awfully worked up about this disclosure of yours. It makes me damned uneasy. I have some very valuable interests tangled up with this son of a gun Wyman. I don't like the looks of this old thing at all. You can put me right on the stand! If that's the man was killed, then, that's Robert Devereux."

"I will come in and see you, Bowen," said Strong.

"I want your best advice, professionally, too," growled the frightened Andy Bowen, who stood shaken at heart over a second glass, and muttering, "Well, I'll be damned!" as Strong left him. There were ugly thoughts now thronging across the startled miner's brain!

"That nails down your coffin, Mr. Frederick Wyman. I have got you now," coldly decreed Strong, as he returned to the ladies. "This mean sneak used the desperate Hooper and this clumsy old Bowen, as mere catspaws. With Stanton, Bowen, the notary, the record books and this picture and the Willows' people, I fancy 'Miss Devereux of the Mariquita' is going to have simply a walk over. And all I want now to close the circle of proofs, is Hooper. It looks, too, as if Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, would make me a present of him very soon."

With all these professional triumphs, Waldo Strong's heart still sank within him as he saw Jack Otis enter the carriage, with Miss Gladys Lyndon and her attendant maid. He was strangely sad as he rolled along on his homeward way with Mrs. Hammond. A very neat supper awaited them, and the man of parchments was also a bit of an epicure, but, he had already shown involuntarily his distrust of Mrs. Hammond.

"Why did you not let me know that she was singing here at Albert Hall?" he coldly said. "I was about to wander off on a fool's trip to Paris, in search of her!"

Milly Hammond had finally determined to cleave alone to the rock of refuge, Buford. She so, could afford the malicious little cut she gave him. "I wished to spare you what you can perhaps easily see. Gladys Lyndon will surely marry this Yankee, Mr. John Wayne Otis, who has a splendid place near Boston. He is of a fine old Revolutionary family and an only son, independently rich. He seems to be personally agreeable to her, does he not?"

The lawyer bit his lip, and yet, Strong did the honors in a most stately guise.

"I shall be leaving London at once. I only came over on a land matter—a large deal in some country ranches. Can I do anything for you in San Francisco?"

And, the cat-like Milly smiled and said, "Nothing, thank you. I, too, am coming home very soon. You see that I have now lost my traveling companion."

Strong had enough of the supper and the running comments! He marked Milly down, and swore to even up, some day.

"I fancy I sweetened his supper for him," laughed Milly, as she reached her own bower, for she had found a "traveling companion" who pleasantly replaced both Wyman, and the gentle girl whose feet had innocently escaped her snares. "I have the only safe place in the whole little chess game here," she laughed. "Everything to gain, and nothing to lose," which was a perfectly correct statement of the case, and did credit to her head, if not to her heart. A very thrifty and self-satisfied Messalina!

Polaris looked down unwinkingly from the dim, blue vault above them, as the two lovers stepped out of Miss Lyndon's carriage at her door after the concert. Hope Devereux was strangely agitated, for, Strong had whispered to her in the waiting room, "I have luckily found the evidence of my man Bowen here, which binds Wyman hand and foot helpless at last before you! Andy Bowen, a rough millionaire, one of his early partners in other matters, is now here. I can easily prove the whole fraud by him, alone. It is hence, a certain victory!"

"You really don't need me, Hope, I am sure now," murmured Otis. "Your lawyer, your regular adviser can safely conduct all."

A soft pressure on his hand led him captive by her side. "Don't forget," said the singer merrily, "You alone are to share my secret. I shall make no public avowal till all is beyond doubt. So, we have a joint secret to guard. If I remain 'Miss Devereux of the Mariquita,' Mr. Waldo Strong shall be my lawyer, but, you," and she fairly flashed a glance upon him, a most provoking glance which made him tremble in a new-born delight, "*you*, are to remain my permanent adviser; I could not spare you," and, a malicious pleasure tinged her voice as she closed, softly saying, "Brother Jack!"

The Recording Angel then and there, started a small ladies' column, for Miss Hope Devereux, and he promptly chalked down one deliberate little white fib. "It seems to be that same 'Brother Jack' business, all the time," murmured the good angel, who was a bit drowsy. "Will they never stop that little fiction?"

As Otis walked home on that night of nights to him, he pondered the last Portia-like words of the beautiful, sweetly serious woman, whom he knew now, he loved madly. "You alone, are entitled to know the whole story, the innocent secret of my past life, and, you shall be the very first to hear it!" A rosy, beloved face, her finger on her smiling lips, was the last thing he saw that night, as a voice now grown strangely dear whispered "Wait;" and, he set forth to linger in a growing happiness which lifted his ardent soul toward the overhanging stars. "So happy. She loves me!"

It seemed a wild dream, a double happiness, for the woman he blindly adored shared that happiness with him, their two hearts beating only for each other, alone, of all the sons and daughters of men. A blessed double happiness!

Mr. Jack Otis sat chafing in the back drawing-room for

an hour the next morning, while he listened to the grave voice of the lawyer and the murmured replies of that fairest of clients, Hope Devereux. The scratching of the lawyer's pen was only broken by his pacing the room, in sudden fits of cogitation. When the sliding doors were at last opened by Strong, the lawyer was radiant.

"There's not a single link missing now, Mr. Otis," he heartily said. "I shall, I think, hasten at once back to San Francisco and then, open every battery on Wyman. Public shame will bring about a private panic soon in this fellow's bosom. I shall take Andy Bowen's deposition here. I can easily see that he is frightened, for he has an immense separate property. He evidently knew nothing of Wyman's desperate rascality. My associate in Virginia City has already cabled me that the papers will be filed to-day, and a temporary injunction also asked for to tie up the whole mine and the stock till the contest is heard."

"Now, sir, it is for you to guard Miss Devereux's privacy here. I have a little matter with the London police of some importance. A couple of days will straighten that out. I have no hesitancy in at once bidding the Anglo-Californian bank to throw up any connection with the proposed deal in the "Lone Star." It would be a public dishonesty. General Buford will also hear of this move and he will surely cable Wyman, so that our man may be all ready to come to terms, when I reach San Francisco. But one thing I do ask of you, both. Miss Devereux must sign no paper, listen to no compromise, discuss nothing! Frederick Wyman is capable of any sly double dealing. I alone control the evidence to right Miss Devereux and to place Frederick Wyman where he belongs, in State's prison for life. That is my share of the work, in return for the score of innocent lives he slaughtered simply to break the market, for I shall always believe that in some sneaking

way, he fired the mine himself! At any rate, his wretched life is not worth a pin's fee, if he ever shows up in Virginia City. He is ruined!"

"We will absolutely obey you," the young couple cried, in a strong, prompt chorus, which brought a mournful smile to Waldo Strong's thoughtful face.

"Will you need me to-morrow for anything?" said Miss Devereux. "You know," she murmured, turning to Jack Otis, "Mrs. Hailey Osgood's garden party is set for to-morrow."

"Do not vary your routine in one single hair," earnestly cried the advocate. "Sing the whole British public into ecstacy, it will keep your mind busy! You are only Miss Gladys Lyndon here, till I cry presto! change. But I beg you to let Mr. Otis go down with me and deposit all your family relics, all these proofs in the bank vault. Your receipt for them in your own real name, is your whole title to the Mariquita mine. Never forget that! The bank will make common cause with you, against the swindler, Wyman. Also, at the last, General Buford will join you, too, for the expense bill of this costly attempt to float the new company here must be met by Wyman alone! He guaranteed his title. I will telegraph to each of you here when I want you, for I shall to-morrow divide my time between Bowen, the photographer, and Scotland Yard!"

"Then, we will go to the garden party?" said Hope Devereux, rising.

"Most certainly," answered Strong. "All I wish you to do is simply to give me your power of attorney here, and then, to avoid the society of all visiting Californians, Mrs. Milly Hammond, in particular."

The meeting glances proved that all present had at last fathomed the dark secret of Mrs. Hammond's wonderful volunteer kindness.

"Could she, could Wyman, have fancied that I was the heiress of the Mariquita?" timidly questioned Hope Devereux.

"There were other reasons, I fancy," said the lawyer dryly, as his eyes met Jack's meaningly. He bundled up his papers. "I see no reason for my asking you to come to California, unless Wyman fights to the last, but, he will not. He cannot! And, you are far safer here. You know what this man is. I count on you, Mr. Otis, to watch over this young lady, day and night."

Otis cast his eyes down in a sudden confusion, for Miss Hope Devereux's face, too, was rosy with the glow of the dawn of love's bright day. Waldo Strong's eyes were fixed gravely upon the girl whose golden future now stretched out far and fair before her. "With your letters to Mrs. McCabe, the records, the assistance of the Catholic clergy, and the sisters, not a moment's doubt can rest on your identity. As for the title, Mr. Wyman's own rascality in admitting and setting up a deed made six months after your murdered father's death, has estopped him from any new defense. No! he stands clearly within the shadow of the prison door. I'll close and lock it on him forever. Only death or flight can save him." And the advocate's face was as pitiless as a Sioux chief firing the fagots around a captive Pawnee brave.

Waldo Strong whistled cheerfully at his afternoon work, carefully approving the photographer's prints of all the documents negatived. "Just as well to lock up the negatives, too, and seal all my own documents."

On his table at the hotel, a brief scrawl had also told him tidings of the gravest moment. The laconic inspector wrote:

"Come to me to-morrow evening. I'll have him there. Keep your rooms all day."

"In case I can get an open confession from this Hooper, then my future work is only a walk over," said the lawyer. His mind was exulting in the drawing of his meshes around Wyman. "He ruined my life. I will make him rue that day!" sternly cried Strong, as he dropped his wearied head in his hands.

He sighed, "Ah! God, How happy she is! How ready for love's sweet mastery!" And then, he dreamed of the past days, before he had wandered away from his successful professional walk, into the mad speculations which wrecked his own rising fortunes. "It might have been! It might have been!" he sighed. "God bless her," he softly said at last in manly fashion. "This Otis seems to be a man of men. A thoroughbred. Strange fatalism of love!"

Neither Hope Devereux nor Jack Otis, dreamed that the man had under Minerva's cold-browed glances, nursed the passion of a whole life, in his strong, silent heart, for, "Love is blind," as blind to-day as in the olden days, when nymph and goddess gleamed in the fair Castilian shades. And blind, love will ever be! It is the will of the high gods we should not see the sweet cup at our lips.

There was never a function in Chiswick-upon-Thames, which excited as much attention as Mrs. Hailey Osgood's never forgotten garden party. The grounds were gaily decorated in a style which opened the eyes of the snug "Britishers" clustered in the homelike villas. Booth and tent; parti-colored flags, multi-colored lanterns, the pert strains of provoking music, the gleam of gowns of all rainbowed colors on the lovely lawns; the chatter of happy voices, the bustle of moving crowds and all the unwonted excitement of a "grand day," aroused the curiosity of the external crowd gaping through the hedges, at the "swells having no end of a good time." The violet-eyed, fresh-faced English girls, "non angli sed angeli," cut wide

swaths in the hearts of the beaux, who were calmly indifferent in manner, but veritable Claude Melnottes at heart! The ice and ices were broken rapidly. Flags waved, birds twittered, the sun shone gaily and a particular hum of grateful approval was murmured from group to group, as Mr. Hailey Osgood and his bewitching wife moved around among their guests on hospitable thoughts intent.

Miss Gladys Lyndon, leaning on the arm of Jack Otis, was welcomed with hushed whispers of tribute. "The beautiful American singer, Miss Lyndon," and sundry descendants of hardy Norsemen, gallant Normans and fair-skinned Saxons growled inaudibly, "I envy that beggar his luck!" for a slight halo of proprietorship already seemed to linger around the shapely head of the Bostonian. He was literally fulfilling Strong's injunction to "take care of Miss Lyndon." The sun hung in loving radiance over the delightful scene, and Jack Otis was dreaming now only of a golden future, and furtively stealing glances at Hope Devereux.

Mrs. Hailey Osgood was leaning forward at the head of the table, proud and radiant in her social triumph, as an enthusiastic guest toasted, "Our noble host, Mr. Hailey Osgood, 'for he's a jolly good fellow,' and all join in."

But, Jack Otis sprang up in wild protest, as three stern-faced looking men in plain clothes suddenly appeared at the side of Hailey Osgood, who had made a wild dash from his seat. The harsh snapping of clicking steel bands was ominously heard!

Two men, blue-shaven and athletic in build, with gleaning, earnest eyes, wrestled Mr. Hailey Osgood violently down to his seat as the third, a folded paper in one hand, a revolver hidden in the other, gravely said, "James Walter Hooper, alias Compton, alias Hailey Osgood, I arrest you in the Queen's name for the crime of forgery!"

Screaming women fainted; men in angry throngs surrounded the struggling officers, who stoutly bore their frantic prisoner on through the surging crowd.

Mrs. Hailey Osgood, a wild light breaking the dreaming charm of her splendid eyes, had sprung at once to her husband's side!

"It's all up, Vinnie!" he fondly said with clouded eyes. "You have nothing to do with this. It's my own affair, gentlemen, the lady is out of this matter. She knows nothing of it, and took me for better or worse."

Jack Otis had darted to the side of the unhappy hostess. Her form was tottering.

"Keep up a bright heart. You're all right," said Hailey Osgood, with one last look of burning love, the parting message of a life's devotion, as he was dragged forcibly away. He twisted his head around and cried, "God bless you, Otis! Look out for her. I won't forget you!"

The descent of Trenck's Pandours, or the irruption of a pattern squad of Manteuffel's Uhlans, sword in hand, could not have created a quicker panic. The sun discreetly dove into a gray cloud. The wheels of vanishing carriages were heard crunching on gravel and rattling on stone, for, the affrighted guests fled to their appropriate domiciles now loathing contamination, and so, stood not in the order of their going.

In a half hour, nothing was visible save a dense crowd peering through the hedges at the deserted scene of the great fête, and struggling with the local "Bobbies" whose loud cries of "move on" fell on deaf ears.

In the house a funereal quiet reigned. The servants seemed all to be frozen at their posts, and some dozen detectives were now carefully searching the house. In "the banquet hall deserted" the untasted feast awaited the "choice spirits" of the inner coterie who were bidden to stay and dine.

It was a local sensation of the hugest dimensions, and the "British public" eagerly awaited further developments, as per the reporter's notes.

"Do I consider myself, too, as under arrest?" asked Vinnie Hinton, her eyes now streaming with tears. "Poor old Jimmy!" she gasped. "Loyal and game to the last. His only thought is for me. God bless him. I never knew him till now!"

Alas! She knew too well in her heart what awaited Mr. James Walter Hooper. A life of "salutary restraint," "moderate diet," "healthful employment," "a judicious economy in raiment and creature comforts," and "vast opportunities for moral reflections." In other words, "transportation for life, in the Queen's name!"

"You are so far, only under surveillance, Madame," said the police sergeant. "That is at present. I would, however, suggest that you communicate at once with your friends, and also your counsel."

The woman bowed her handsome head, and cried with a stifled voice: "You have dragged away the only friend I had in the world. Poor old Jimmy! If I could only put my arms once more around your neck and say: 'Jimmy, I loved you at the last more than I ever thought to love any mortal man.'" And, she wrung her hands. "He thought only of me, only of me, poor old Jimmy."

By her side, stood Hope Devereux, her sweet eyes filled with the friendly tears of innocence. "I am so sorry for you. Can I do anything? You must be helped. This is terrible!"

"God bless you! Do you know what you are saying? Wait! Wait! I'll repay you some day."

Jack Otis leaned over her, "Make it as easy as you can. Say nothing. If you wish anything done, count on me!"

The blunt police sergeant was moved. He walked to

the other end of the room, for Jim Hooper's last thought of the woman he loved, had touched the oaken fibers of the official's heart. "He is as game as they make 'em. A right good one, an out and outer, a true blue, but he's a lifer, if he lives to see the Judge," and, the burly policeman sighed "Transportation!"

For, the stout sergeant well knew that Strong's San Francisco data, and Mr. Frederick Wyman's cowardly anonymous letter had enabled them to at last secretly trap the head of the great international forgery conspiracy. Even at this very moment the associates of Hooper, drifting unwarned into "Compton's," and the lodging-house, were being one by one apprehended. Mr. Tony Morani had well earned the gold paid him by Mr. Hooper's traitor partner in crime. And the coward Wyman had done his work only too well!

"Mr. Otis, I will trust to you," whispered Vinnie of the "cryin' eyes." "You are talking to Vinnie Hinton. My name has long been notorious on the Pacific coast."

Jack glanced quickly at Hope Devereux. Vinnie's eyes followed his.

"That, is why I speak plainly! I would sooner die than hurt a hair of that dear girl's head. She is a pearl, if there is one under the dark waters of life. You'll make no mistake," she smiled sadly. "I had to keep my eyes on her. I feared that California millionaire, Wyman, this girl's apparent patron. He was the only man whom I thought could have given us away. But, this blow has fallen suddenly, strangely. He is out in California. I only watched Miss Lyndon in a friendly way, to be able to safely change our location, when Wyman came out here to marry the millionaire Buford's girl."

"See here," said Jack, earnestly. "I do believe and trust you. I am not here to sit in judgment on you.

I will help you as I would any American woman alone in distress here. Had this Wyman any reason to hate you?" he asked, seriously.

"He feared me, and—" her head was bowed. "Jimmy took me away from him!"

"I suppose he really wanted to get rid of you, and then denounced you by telegraph or letter. You can't tell me Wyman's wiles. I happen to know he's a scoundrel."

"Now, whatever Osgood has been mixed up in, his last words to you were to keep silent, and, he has tried to shield you. Now, we will both stay here till I know you are in no immediate danger. I'll do anything I can for you, and, I will go and see Osgood in prison. They wouldn't let you, but I will give him any message or letter that you give to me. I can reach Scotland Yard, strangely, by a happy accident."

"God bless you," the humbled woman cried. "See here! I only want you not to forget to tell him that I'll make myself his widow! I've got money hidden away of my own, no matter how I got it. It's mine! I'll follow him, and I know that money will soften even a 'lifer's' lot, in time." Her eyes flashed, and her carven breast heaved.

Jack Otis gazed at her, in a frank admiration. He sighed, "you have too good a heart to have drifted along in such troubled waters."

"Never mind the past!" said Vinnie. "I'll stand by Jimmie Hooper to the last, for old times' sake, and, because he showed the game man, under fire. Poor old Jimmie!"

Before Otis led Hope Devereux away, he had agreed upon a rendezvous with Vinnie for the morning. "You will telegraph to me for counsel, if you, too, should be arrested," said Otis.

"I will also see that you are warned, sir," said the

sergeant, "if you will give me your personal card. This lady shall have all her legal rights, besides." The good fellow fancied that the beauty of the "half-cryin' eyes," was the victim of an ex-convict's matrimonial wiles.

When the startled lovers reached Hope Devereux's house the papers were already announcing the arrest of the noted Yankee forger, James Walter Hooper! There was much particularity but no word was written to the international forgeries.

"I must see Strong at once," Otis anxiously whispered to Hope Devereux, as he gave her the evening journals at her door. "Wait for us. This arrest of Hooper is important. There is something hidden under all this which deeply affects your future life. It is a strange mystery!"

It seemed almost incredible, that such currents should waft Hope Devereux, here and there, on their troubled waters, with no stain on her past life. "What is the hidden history of her girlhood?" mused Jack as he hastened away to Strong's hotel. But, two dear shining eyes repeated their silent promise, "Wait in hope! All will be well," and so he abided, strong in the faith builded by a love now past all bounds.

Mrs. Milly Hammond sat astounded in her rooms when her eyes fell upon the glaring headlines telling of Hooper's arrest. "Shall I send for Strong? No!" she quickly decided, and with a woman's interest for a lover, who might yet be a sheet-anchor in days of storm, she penned a cablegram to Mr. Frederick Wyman, at San Francisco. "I think that some way Strong is behind this. I know he hates Wyman. And besides, he is useless to me. He has no money!" She grimly smiled, and then wrote the fateful lines:

"Hooper, the fugitive broker arrested to-day here for forgery. A woman with him. Probably Vinnie H.,

Waldo Strong here on secret business. Look out. What does it mean?" Her signature "Milly," would be a key-note to arouse him.

It did so arouse Mr. Frederick Wyman, who was raging next morning at San Francisco, that he saw at last the reason of the filing of the contest at Virginia City as well as the bringing forward of an heiress of the murdered Devereux.

A savage dispatch from General Hiram Buford, too, notified him that the bank had publicly retired from all connection with the "Lone Star."

Wyman's first move was to cable to General Buford begging him to return to San Francisco. "All depends on you. Family interests saved if you come. Your personal interests largely increased. Victory easily in our power! I assume all expenses." So the desperate gamester dispatched.

The evening train saw Mr. Tony Morani on his way back to London. As the master pressed the Frenchman's hand in parting he said, "Remember, not a single word unless Strong has visited Hooper in prison. If Hooper will only keep his mouth shut, I will settle up everything here, if he stands square. He won't be tried for a month or so, till the proofs go on from here. I will watch over all, and if there's nothing else against him, I can pull him out. As for Vinnie, my letter will fix her all right, and you can tell her, too, to spare no money."

Mr. Antoine Morani smiled, as his master's form was lost to sight. "I have you now in my power," he grinned as he thought of a happy reunion with his bright-eyed little Parisienne.

But, the blackening clouds had burst in the great storm upon Mr. Frederick Wyman's house built upon the sand. He sprang, revolver in hand, from his bed, in alarm, as a

belated dispatch was handed to him that very night. It was from his great legal "battery" in Virginia City. The winds were pregnant of a coming day of doom.

"Buford is my only hope now," he cried, "I must get him to come here and square the judge," for a temporary legal injunction had been granted, which tied up the whole stock and the priceless mine, until the Devereux Estate hearing and the contest upon the patent had been decided.

"It is this scoundrel Strong, who is behind this," raved Wyman. Then, with a sudden sinking of the heart, he saw the hidden source of the deadly enmity. "It's that damned white-faced singing girl," he cried. "Miss Gladys Lyndon, she has been my ruin."

He had aged ten years in appearance, when one single gleam of hope broke through the clouds in General Buford's answering dispatch. It contained a few words of hope. "Coming. Sail to-morrow. Stand firm."

"Ah!" sneered Wyman, "the General will fight like a rat for his own pocket, and to save his daughter's name. That marriage alone, will save me now!" and the nobleman of Nature then expended a few golden twenties in words which warmed the cable in their perfunctory tenderness. They were directly addressed to Miss Minnie Buford, and were the first sincere expressions of his troubled heart, for the maiden was now his chosen Joan of Arc to drive forth the enemies from his imperiled kingdom of the "Lone Star."

"But, where in the devil did they scrape up the heiress of Devereux?" Wyman sought an answer to this question in the stars for many weary nights, but, the unpitying stars were silent as they swung over Devereux's lonely grave.

Jack Otis found the Californian lawyer pacing his rooms in excitement.

"Just the man I wanted," cried Strong. I am going to see Hooper at Newgate, to-morrow, as I must get away to California at once to protect the bank's interests, and cripple Wyman. I do not wish him to have a chance to get outside of American jurisdiction. Tell me all!"

When the Bostonian had described the events of the garden party, Strong said:

"Now I have all my points! A profound quiet is being kept for a week about the international forgeries. The police wish to apprehend the scattered members of the band of forgers on the Continent who have aided in these great London frauds. Hooper only thinks that he has the Californian matters before him. He may make a clean breast to me! An American prison is a paradise compared to English transportation. Now, if the authorities here cripple and scatter the smartest band of swindlers in Europe, they will give us Hooper. I wish to obtain his confidence and get a clean breast as to the Wyman matter. His deposition before arraignment, is still admissible in all our courts."

"I must see him with you," slowly said Otis. "That woman loves him madly, and she wishes me to bear him a message. Will you see her?"

"No," said the lawyer, after cogitation. "Vinnie Hinton might warn Wyman. She will be watched, they tell me, but not arrested. You can tell her she may as well leave England. She can do nothing for Hooper. When do you see her?"

"To-morrow, as early as I can reach Chiswick," said Otis, "and I must see Hooper to-morrow." He thought of the lonely woman in the villa, fighting against fate to soften her lover's hard future life.

"I don't see how it can be done," regretfully replied Strong. "Now, if you were only a lawyer!"

Jack Otis smiled. "I was an humble light of Cambridge Law School, and I have here both the sheepskins of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and of the highest court of the United States! My mother's estate and my own business have kept me out of public practice. I have just money enough to rob me of the ambition to scrape up dollars."

"So, architecture is then only a fad?" smiled Strong.

"One of my fads," Jack replied. "I intended to write a book on that very subject. Most people now seem to feel the internal summons to write—to write something or another. There is a vague expectation that we men of University training will do something. Politics is a dirty pool! We have no American civil or foreign device of any continuity. I never liked the army or navy, as a mere profession of elegant leisure. The church or medicine never tempted me. I am neither fit to cure souls nor bodies! I admire the beautiful theory of the law. The practice of the profession in America is too often only a matching of questionable expedients. So, the book, the book, has loomed up, but there is absolutely no protection for an indignant public against the book craze, so, I threatened to write a book."

"Unfortunately, you are right," dryly said Strong. "Now, shake off this drowsy sloth, death's counterfeit. You will come to me with your sheepskins. Their exhibition will qualify you. Technically, I'll ask Hooper to send for you. You can then have a half hour with him, and thus fulfill your generous purpose. Get back to the warden's office at Newgate as soon as you can."

It was a happy thought which caused Otis to send his man at once to Chiswick, with a warning letter to Mrs. Hailey Osgood.

"My man is faithful. He will stay a day or so

with you. You can trust him in anything," Otis wrote, for Strong had told him of the possible vital importance of Hooper's confession to the interests of Miss Hope Devereux.

"You can get some valuable material for your book in considering the substantial construction of Newgate," laughed Strong, "but I presume you will now abandon architecture, for a time at least."

The hands of the two men met in a kindly grasp as they said "Good-night." It was years before Otis understood the secret of the manly self-surrender of the grave-faced counselor.

Flashing eyed, tearless and coldly proud, Mrs. Hailey Osgood had dismissed all her retinue, save her devoted maid and one man. On the next morning, the house was being dismantled and the sound of workmen packing and casing the splendors of her home was heard, as Jack Otis rosy and alert, received her last instructions.

"I'll keep your man with me," she said. "Now, if you will only give poor Jimmy this letter. If you will only tell him, that if it's ten years and all around the world, in his saddest lonely hours to remember I am as near him as money and love can bring me! I will be there, working, watching and waiting, that is if I am alive. I'll find my way to him, past all those bolts and bars!"

"I will come back to you the instant I am free," cried Jack Otis, with a gleam of admiration at the dauntless adventuress. "Wasted wine of life," he mused as he drove to the river steamer. "What a woman if she had only gone the right way!" And, he never paused to ask himself if the lonely pariah of loveliness had ever been left free to choose the right path! Whether man's cold brutality had not dragged her down, or whether she was only one of those marvels of nature's handiwork, which are

doomed to be the collective property of all men of means and vicious leisure.

Jack Otis started as the gloomy doors of the Newgate corrider clanged behind him.

It was eleven o'clock, and Strong had hastily whispered, "He knows now, who Hope Devereux is! Make notes of what he voluntarily tells you as to the 'Lone Star' mine. He knows nothing as yet, of the real cause of his arrest."

Jack Otis had a list of a dozen prominent London barristers, solicitors and attorneys. His precaution was useless, for when James Walter Hooper rose from his coarse truckle bed within a six by ten stone cell where one window only lit up a Bible and a copy of the prison regulations, he said hoarsely as he grasped Otis' hands, "You come to me from her. Moments are now precious. You only have half an hour. Did you bring your note-book?

Jack produced writing materials and then handed him the letter, which the forger read greedily. The Bostonian studied him as he stood in a corner, veiled from the wicket opening. Great rings encircled the criminal's eyes, in which, there now gleamed all the desperation of a hungry wolf.

He handed the letter back. In the presence of the American, he had covered it with kisses. "Take it back to her. They would soon search me and take it away from me. But, it is safe in my soul. God bless her, my poor Vinnie! Tell her my heart, my life, my very soul went out in these kisses where her hand has rested. That's all!"

"Now write! I will dictate." And, to Jack Otis' astonishment, Hooper named an attorney of national reputation, and gave some simple directions as to his house affairs, and as to her future course. "I have powerful

friends," he whispered. "Now a single leaf of your note-book." In ten minutes he gave to the wondering Yankee a missive covered with strange figures and characters, unknown to ordinary correspondence. "Now! To a man who is dead to the world, you can render the last service due to the dead—the living dead," sadly said the forger. He leaned over to the Bostonian. "Get back to her the very first instant you can! Our salvation depends on it. Tell her to do what I have written, and instantly get out of London, over the Channel this very night. It may soon be too late. Then I will be able to sleep. I only care for her now. Then I can face the future! But, let her foot not linger a single moment. Leave all the house trash, tell her, with any honest agent. It's all bought in her own name, her very own. For God's sake, go! And, to my dying day I'll love your brave name! I'll cherish your manly face. Will you do this for me?"

Otis gazed at this villain transfigured by love. "You love her?" he murmured.

"To the death, in life and death, in hell itself! Tell her so! Tell her it was my last spoken word."

As Otis grasped his hands and murmured, "I am sorry for you," Hooper whispered:

"Tell Hope Devereux that I have given Strong the whole history of the false deed. He will have my legal deposition before you get back to Chiswick, and tell her also, to remember that I was poor and desperate. I did not know that I was robbing a helpless, orphaned child; but Wyman, the scoundrel traitor, did, and thought to screen himself behind me. The man was really dead when I signed the name. There was then no such man, but the devil, Wyman, uttered the deed, and traded on the dead man's name. He recorded it, and for him, there is a heavier punishment even than for me. As for the other deeds of my

past life, that history of folly and crime I will have to answer for, alone."

"Otis," said Hooper, "tell Miss Devereux that a convict's contrite blessing will not harm her. Make her your wife. For God's sake, remember always that she is a loving woman, life and passion throbbing in her veins; not a mere machine, to answer to your touch. Give her of your best. Be true to her, and you'll have the best that lies in her heart and soul. I'll trust a woman who loves me; trust her to the death, without her oath or promise, farther than any one bound down by cold orders! Look at Vinnie, true in trouble! Tell her I trust her to the very death; that I know, love will find the way!"

Jack Otis was misty-eyed as he wandered away down the narrow, dark corridor where rude crosses, scratched with a nail on the whitewashed wall, told of the men lying there under the cold flagstones, whose last glance on high had seen the black flag waving over the gloomy stone tower of Newgate, and on whose faces, Mr. Calcraft's eyes had rested last in perfect professional coolness, as he wafted them out to the dark unknown, to lie later in the burial corridor.

"I'm going to Chiswick," gasped Jack Otis, as he led Strong out from under the shadow of the chilling Newgate walls. "He has frankly owned up all to me, all about the Truckee forgery."

"See here!" said Strong, "you must get back then to my rooms as soon as you can, and also have Miss Devereux surely await us to-night. I must leave to-morrow morning, for the slyboots, Mrs. Hammond, left suddenly to-day for America. If I mistake not, she may try to warn and help Wyman. That woman is a far different being from what her social sign-post holds out."

"By heavens!" said Strong looking at his time-tables,

"if I take the midnight train at Euston Square, I can get on the very same boat with her."

"The British public will have to be disappointed then, Strong," said Jack, "for, Miss Gladys Lyndon was to sing as usual to-night. It is the regular concert day."

"It will only teach them to bear it all the better, in future," good-humoredly said the lawyer, as he turned back to get the deposition of Hooper duly executed on the records before the felon taint attached to him, for the whole miserable truth was now laid bare, and Frederick Wyman was at last, at the mercy of his relentless foe!

The steamer "Broad Arrow" was not quick enough for Jack Otis. He chafed vainly as the little boat seemed to dally at every landing, from Blackfriars along to Chiswick, but, he was not long delayed at the Hailey Osgood villa. The house was closed, and his own man opened the door. He had kept his horses in waiting.

By a presentiment of urgent affairs, Mrs. Hailey Osgood was ready for instant action. Without a word, Otis drew her into a little reception room and then closed the door. She was dressed for travel, and her alert maid, similarly accoutred, sat in the hall with a heavy traveling case, bearing ear-marks of Chubb's hideous ingenuity.

"Will you act for me in the proper closing up of this house? I go on to Ostend to-night," cried Vinnie Hinton, her cheeks very pale. Her hands trembled as she thrust the two letters back in her bosom. "Come! We can talk on the way," for, Jack had answered with a nod.

Without turning her head, Mrs. Hailey Osgood walked out of the house where her purest social triumphs had so disarmed her, and where she had sadly found out that "the dazzling luck was too good to last." "I'll send my own maid back with tidings, from Dover," the keen-witted

woman said. "Let her attend then to all. She is honest. Give me your own movements for the evening, and remember that I may have to telegraph to you or Miss Devereux. I will have something of importance also to communicate to her." The horses were now racing swiftly toward the landing.

As the steamer sped down the river, Vinnie Hinton said: "You had better leave me at Westminster. I go on farther." She spoke through the double folds of an ash of rose veil, which hid the "half cryin' eyes" from the curious. "Ask Miss Devereux to wait at home until I come, at her own house. I will surprise her. It is imperative!"

Otis bowed his head and then, wondered where the fugitive woman had learned of Gladys Lyndon's secret. Ah! the cipher letter of her imprisoned lover. So he promised to obey, and whispered, "I will be there also, so, I shall surely see you again."

There was a grateful flash of her bright brave eyes through the veil as the boat dove into the floating brown shadows of the Parliament Houses. "If I only dared to, I would say 'God bless you both,' but I dare not." Her tears were falling. Vinnie Hinton regretfully saw the past for a moment as when she was unstained.

"One last favor. Will you keep these till I come? my jewels," she sobbed in a voice of mingled shame and sorrow. And so, she was whirled away with her throbbing burdens of head and heart, of vanished hopes, of present fears, of saddest memories.

The Bostonian stood on the landing, his heart strangely moved as the boat sped down the river. She was borne away alone out on the troubled waters of a new life of stormy adventure. In some strange vague way, he felt the pity that thrills when a beautiful flower lies trodden

down in the mire under the hurrying feet of the passing crowd. Borne down, borne far away from the harbor light, out into the stormy sea of passion, alone, out on life's dark ocean once more, and driving along, whither?

He had not answered that question when he entered gentle Hope Devereux's home with the sin won jewels of the vanished Phryne still in his keeping.

The narration of the day's doings was at last all over, and Hope Devereux, with shaded eyes, had listened to Jack Otis, who was the bearer of the grave tidings sent by Waldo Strong. The girl's face was strangely pale. She was robed to-day in white, and the only fleck of color she showed, was a bright knot of roses on her moulded breast, culled from the morning offering of the "architectural student." The tinge of a faint color on her pale cheeks deepened, as she fixed her earnest eyes on the tell-tale face of her lover. There was a strange brooding fondness in her glance, as if a past wrong was to be atoned! In the room no sound was heard save the hollow ticking of a hidden clock. Something seemed to press upon their hearts!

"It is beyond all doubt, then, that this valuable property will come down to me from my dear parents, the fruit of my father's wasted years of privation, the reward of my mother's patient suffering? That this man has no shadow of an honest claim to my strange birthright?" Her voice trembled, in its wistful eagerness.

"It seems to be so, beyond any possibility of failure," gravely replied her watching lover. "Mr. Strong tells me also that the San Francisco bank has telegraphed back their own lawyers' opinion, that the title is absolutely vested now in you, to three-quarters of a property which is worth to-day, several millions. It seems like a dream, a fairy tale, but it is, thank God, true, and, this Wyman also stands hugely in your debt, for back unpaid profits."

The girl shuddered. "I care not for him! I only pray God never to see him again. Listen," and a wondrous sweet smile then stole over her face, as her dreaming eyes were downcast. "I can *now*, tell you the innocent secret of my girlhood."

"The death of my dear faithful mother, following the disappearance of my murdered father, left me to the kind friendship alone of poor old manager McCabe, who was attached to a small San Francisco theater. He placed me in the Visitation convent. His sudden death made me there, simply a charity scholar, for, his wife, who lives yet, thank God, to share my good fortune, was too poor to help me, a defenseless child, further." There were bright tears of gratitude falling now from her shaded eyes. They fell upon Mr. Jack Otis' bronzed palms, for, he was kneeling now before her, and, he was kissing the little white hands which lay so confidingly in his own.

The story of her helpless childhood, the orphan's blank, unloved girlhood, was told in her loving, hesitating words. "God bless the dear sisters! It was the only return I could make them when I left the shelter of the dear old convent to promise them not to use my own name, in a public life, for, I dreamed of a future success upon the boards. I owed my humble story to no one. Mrs. McCabe has always known my every movement. The dear Sisters, too. But, they are always mute, the world drifts by them unheeded."

Jack Otis' breast was heaving in a tempest of wild emotions.

"When I received Mrs. Hammond's seemingly generous offer of aid to come abroad, I eagerly embraced it. The path only seemed to lead out to fame, to honor, to action, and, to an honestly earned fortune. It was only in Paris —in Paris—" the sobbing girl faltered, "that I knew at

last her apparent kindness, was only the mask of another's basest motives. I could not tell you then! I had no right to appeal to you. Every woman has to make that fight alone! But here, I am under my own little roof. You know my daily life, and you alone, have the right to know that I would not tell the history of my childhood's sorrows to those who might not care to know. I could not tell them how a mother died in a hospital alone, broken down in grief, withering slowly in that horrible suspense, the living death of my father's strange vanishing, and bowed down with struggling to keep her little one from eating the bitter bread of charity."

Hope Devereux's fair head was bent in sorrow. The silence of that room was unbroken, and yet, to Otis it seemed that some heavenly spirit of peace hovered in love near them, for on his breast, "her head like some over-wearied dove, came fluttering down to rest."

She lifted her lovely face to gaze in his eyes, and whispered, "That is my poor little life history, Jack! *You know the rest!*"

His strong arms were around her as he said, "You knew my own dearest one I loved you madly all the while! That I only waited but the moment when it was fair to speak to you, when your success would have placed you as far above me as you are now; when you could stoop to conquer, for, in all those days, Gladys, you were my Hope." He smiled.

"I wanted to have something more than myself to give you! I wished to bring you a name, one worthy to mate with your own," the happiest woman in London smiled, looking up, in his arms.

"My own darling," cried Jack, "I will take away *both* of your names and give you *mine* for life, and, my love to eternity." The fair head was lifted from his breast.

"I must say something to you, sir," she said, with a last flash of returning womanly spirit. "I would have spoken to you before, but, I did not wish Mr. Strong to know of it. He told me I could have any money I wished! I wrote to the bank in Paris to pay my debt of two thousand dollars, for I had already one thousand of it saved up. Do you know what they wrote me back, sir?"

Jack Otis' face was crimson as he answered "No,"—another whopper!

Rosy fingers extracted a little billet from her bosom. "Read that!" triumphantly said the singer, as her sparkling eyes met his in a tender, witching, gleam.

The formal words were definite enough. "In reply to yours, we beg leave to say that your agent, Mr. John Wayne Otis, paid us on his first and only visit, the whole sum of your indebtedness in cash, taking a receipt in your name. You, therefore, are not in our debt!" There was a brooding silence, but, he could feel her gentle heart beat against his own.

"When will you marry me?" said Jack Otis, now facing the ordeal of his life, with the very utmost unconcern.

Miss Hope Devereux deliberately replaced the little document in its mysterious hiding place. "Not until I have paid you back that two thousand dollars," she softly said, as her dreaming eyes met her lover's. "Then, I will know and feel that I am indeed 'Miss Devereux of the Mariquita.'"

And the gentleman from Boston was fain to be content with the loving woman's gentle little subterfuge, for, as yet, the fortune buried far away under the stony bosom of Mount Davidson seemed to her to be only fairy gold!

In the shadows of the evening, a carriage drove up to Miss Gladys Lyndon's door. The whisper of the maid in the hall brought Otis out to the instant reception of the

anxiously expected visitor. In the parlor, Vinnie Hinton threw aside her shrouding veils and showed to them a face as pale as marble, with two eyes glowing there, as coals of steady blown fire.

"I have but a few moments! I am watched, followed. Miss Devereux," cried the queen of light loves, "here is a packet of invaluable papers. They are yours alone! My gift in contrite sorrow. They are the papers which were taken from your father's dead body, for, Jim Hooper learned from Andy Bowen that he had given all Steven Berard's papers to this mean scoundrel, Wyman. Hooper wanted an invincible hold on Wyman. *I stole them from Wyman myself*, one time when he had drank too much wine! I gave them to Jimmy. Wyman raged. He feared to advertise for them. He never suspected me, but, Jimmy was always afraid of him."

"You can thank only Mr. Otis for them. His manly kindness to Hooper is the cause of this last visit. His bringing me Hooper's message has saved all there is left in life for me. I leave England forever to-night! I shall never see you again, but, I shall hear of you. I have sacredly promised myself to know in future years how happy you are, as the wife of a man who so nobly stooped to help the friendless."

She took the girl's hands in hers and then kissed them dumbly. A little packet was pressed in the rosy palm of the astonished girl. And then, she vanished as a flitting shade of the night!

When Jack Otis returned from the sidewalk, the clang of a carriage door and the rattle of wheels told that the desperate woman was already on her way to where freedom lay in Belgium, far beyond the tossing Channel foam.

Mr. John Wayne Otis was debating in his mind the legal morality of his actions of the day, as he returned with

clouded eyes, for he locked up one secret of a life in his breast. Vinnie Hinton had whispered as he gave back to her the case of jewels: "Everything is safe! By to-morrow, I will be out of England, and the price of his future liberty too, is far beyond the control of the police."

"Promise me!" Jack had whispered, "you are too good for the fate before you. Hooper has a wonderful real ability, if he ever escapes—"

"I will lead a new life, so help me God," the sobbing woman cried, "for, the cup of sin is bitter enough. I have sworn to die or free him, and, I will!"

Jack Otis thought in amazement of the last flash of her burning eyes, when six months later, far away, he learned that Convict Hooper, "a lifer," had, *very strangely*, fallen overboard in the harbor of Ceylon, and there drowned, or else his body was devoured probably by sharks, for, his remains were not recovered.

It was on the shaded lawns of his old home by the Charles in future happy days that a scrawl, "All right now. We have not forgotten your advice!" reached him. It had been mailed at Athens, under a double cover. The signature of "Mrs. Hailey Osgood," recalled to him that the great continental band of bank swindlers had been later proved to have had extensive and influential correspondents in all parts of the financial world.

"By Heavens! She is a brave one, is Vinnie! She bought her way to him and then, unlocked his fetters with a golden key," he correctly divined.

Miss Hope Devereux was standing waiting in her drawing room as her lover entered it and a strange wonder filled her eyes. In her hands the little packet of the departing fugitive lay opened. A matchless ruby ring whose pigeon blood flush filled the whole room with its waves of warm red light, lay there. Twisted around it, was a little

bit of parchment. The words, too, were strange, "It belonged to a great Empress once! Don't fear to take it! I bought it myself with honest money, the fruit of the one fortunate investment I ever made in stocks." It was the thank offering of the vanished beauty with the "half cryin' eyes!"

It was ten o'clock that night, when Counselor Waldo Strong bade adieu to his beautiful client. "There is nothing more for you to do now, Miss Hope," he said, "but to await my safe arrival in Virginia City. Of course, Wyman will soon know that Hooper has 'peached' in full as regarded the false deed to the 'Mariquita.' This Hooper is a singular fellow, and evidently has always feared some sudden betrayal. He has called in one of the greatest English criminal lawyers, and one of their clerks was present when Hooper's voluntary deposition was taken as to the Truckee affair. The consent of his attorney and the Crown, gives us all the more credit, in using that evidence. I fancy that Hooper has hoarded away in some safe retreat on the continent, his share of the profits of these great bank forgeries. If I mistake not, Jim the Penman was the only head man within the danger line here, and the powerful gang of intelligent European criminals interested will help him out, if they can. He told me to say to you, that everything was all right. You are to see his lawyer and tell him any news about Vinnie that you wish to reach Hooper. It leaves you now, free to watch over Miss Devereux. I have all the papers, and all the authority I need. My only fear is that Wyman may discover your identity. He is or will be soon, desperate! I do not wish you to come on to Virginia City and be exposed there, to his possible schemes, without adequate protection."

Strong's face was twitching in some hidden storm of feelings. "Your safest course is just now, to remain here

under your stage name and to continue your engagement! I intend to bring criminal proceedings at once, against Frederick Wyman. I will cable to you of his arrest. In the meanwhile, Mr. Otis must be responsible for your daily safety here. I forgot to say that I will cable to you decisive news from New York, as I have instructed my associate to report to me by wire there. There is nothing else. I will have five days leeway, before the cases are called, unless, some steamer accident should delay me."

"Once that he is safely under arrest, then, you must come West at once. I forgot to say that if you wish any money, Miss Devereux, the Anglo-Californian bank here will honor your check to any reasonable amount. Don't be afraid to call on them."

Jack Otis was astounded when Miss Hope Devereux then resolutely said with a most determined glance at him, "I wished very much to use a large sum of money at once, Mr. Strong. I had intended to speak to you of this matter, but, all seems so like a dream to me, and your departure is so sudden."

"Is it a very large sum?" anxiously demanded Waldo Strong. "I could give you my own check here! The bank will pay it, and I will telegraph them from the station. I would like to arrange it, if I can."

"It is a *very large sum*," said "Miss Devereux of the Mariquita," as the lawyer and Otis exchanged startled glances. The young heiress of Mount Davidson's millions was already a spendthrift in thought. "Two thousand dollars," she solemnly said with a frightened air, as she turned her eyes resolutely away from the Bostonian, who had started laughingly up, in eager protest.

"I can write you a check for that, very easily," smiled the lawyer as he called for pen and ink. "Now, Miss Devereux," he explained, "You must write your name across the back, 'Hope Devereux,' when you cash it."

A trembling hand on which a great pigeon blood ruby shone in fiery splendor traced that name which she was fated to use in this way but once, in her life!

"There, sir!" she cried triumphantly to John Wayne Otis. He stood, his heart leaping up in a sudden joy, as Miss Devereux of the Mariquita said to her lawyer. "When you write to me from New York, you can address your letters to——."

"Mrs. John Wayne Otis, *at this same residence*," cried Jack.

"I have no further fears, then, for your personal safety, God bless you both!" said the disciple of Blackstone, as he went out alone into the night.

Before he had lost sight of Fastnet light, Counselor Strong replied to a very hearty telegram which the tender brought aboard at Queenstown. Its words were few, but, they closed the pages of one of life's books to him forever!

"Married yesterday. Your full control of all California and Nevada affairs remains unchanged."

The signature told him of a new defiance to the powers of fate and the storms of life, in the union of two loving hearts, for there was no longer any such legal entity as Miss Devereux, of the Mariquita. She was but a sweet, provoking shadow of the past!

It was to Mr. and Mrs. John Wayne Otis that the lawyer's congratulations were dispatched, and the good ship bore him out on the heaving deep, his heart lonely and sorrowing, yet, filled with the consciousness of duty well done. "It is hard to look at happiness, through another man's eyes."

"There is something yet, awaiting me," thought Waldo Strong. "It's to avenge outraged justice, to strip the mask from this scoundrel's face, to revenge the innocent blood shed in the man trap at Willows Cross Roads, and

to fathom the dark mystery of the 'Lone Star' shaft." Looking back over the darkening waves, to where Fastnet light gleamed out in the gathering gloom, he buried the one love of a life, in the last sigh which he devoted to the memory of the past.

"God bless you, my own darling!" he murmured, and then, the peace of the brooding night entered the soul of the lonely man, and wrapped him in a mantle of happy dreams.

CHAPTER XV.

The Echoless Shore.

"There is one thing which I had not thought of, dearest," said Mr. John Wayne Otis, as he presided with an exaggerated sense of "the responsibilities he had assumed," at a very jolly, if impromptu, wedding dinner. "It seems as if I were stealing you from the public which has after all been your true and faithful friend. Your career, your present engagement," he said, thinking ruefully of Mr. Ernest Thomas.

"I have a permanent engagement for life, to sing for you, sir," the bride gaily remarked, "and, you must try to make me forget fame, in your love."

Her fair head was nestling low on his breast, when he suddenly remembered a little business matter. "I cashed your check to-day, to save appearances! It was drawn to the order of Hope Devereux. Will you allow me, Mrs. Otis?" and, he handed her the firstlings of her recovered inheritance, in a very neat packet of white Bank of England notes.

"What is this for?" faltered his wife.

"Are you aware," he laughed, "that we cannot carry on this picnic honeymoon, forever! Mr. Thomas comes here this very evening, to arrange for your reappearance. It is only just, that he should provide in time, for his vacancy."

"And, what will you do with me, sir," demanded the girl, who had not yet awakened from the dream which had flushed a sudden life, into her splendid eyes.

"I am going to first, show you the dearest old home on the Charles, and, some one waiting to welcome you there. Your new duties to the vast property in dispute will soon take you westward, for, Hope, my darling, I see a shadow floating on the hitherto bright future of the invincible Wyman. I will not risk you out there, till his fate is determined, but, the avenging furies are already on his trail. Depend upon it, Strong will show him no mercy! You cannot. You must not! He will not, and, Wyman is a human wolf, blood thirsty, ravenous, cowardly. You cannot spare him. It would be compounding a felony."

The sudden arrival of the bustling Mr. Ernest Thomas cut off this serious colloquy. "Sorry to deprive you of Miss Lyndon," said the genial manager; "but, you know the public interests of the lady are now considerable. I must arrange the programme for to-morrow evening."

Jack Otis took him kindly by the hand. "Mr. Thomas," he said, "I wish now to thank you for all your generous liberality, the honest family friendship as well, towards my wife, but, as soon as you can find a fitting successor, Mrs. Otis will devote herself, please God, to an extended wedding tour. And, I am sorry for your sake, that it will take her away from the cordial audiences who have honored her with their warm appreciation."

Thomas gazed into the happy eyes of the great singer now lost to him forever. He threw himself into an arm chair. "There is a fatality which wrecks every plan I make! Good Heavens! What am I saying though?" and the cheery old boy sprang to his feet.

"I'm sure, you know, I most heartily congratulate you both! Oh! yes, I do!" he said, as an air of comical doubt lingered on the faces of the delighted couple. "You young rascal!" he cried finally, as laughter overcame his managerial sorrows, "I will never again admit a wolf in sheep's clothing, into my waiting rooms."

"Ah! You could not help it, Thomas," said Jack Otis, fondly. "It was written in the stars! I have had but one thought since I met the sweet woman I am robbing you of. It was to give her, in a happy life, a secure home in a husband's love, some return, for passing by the cherished laurels.

"Now, this is so far your secret alone! Your present engagement will not be broken, but, my good friend," he cordially said, "I will assume *the whole management of the lady, hereafter.*"

"Will your wife continue to sing," said the open-eyed Briton, still astounded.

"I hope so! I will permit her to sing for you, when you visit us some day, on the Charles; and, always for myself," maliciously remarked Jack. "Yes, she shall sing in the future, but only under my direction, and in my own immediate vicinity."

A compact was soon made which effected the manager's forgiveness.

"You will take your first dinner in 'the state to which it has pleased God to call you,' at my house?"

"I certainly owe you that, in return for all your true kindness," smilingly said the happy bride. "In the meantime, I am yet, to all, only Miss Gladys Lyndon."

"By Jove!" cried the now anxious manager, "I must be off; for telegraphing, writing and exploring for a successor to you, will make my life a fever, until, until I have, I hope, the fortune to find some one who may replace you on the stage, but, Miss Gladys," he sighed, "not in our hearts!" And so, the good, bustling soul fled away, his remarks as to the trials of managerial life punctuating his departure in wistful regret.

"Now, darling," said Jack Otis, as Thomas ruefully departed, "we are facing the future fairly. When our

little masquerade is over, I will take you home, as soon as Strong will allow us to sail. We must allow him time to trap Wyman."

"And, the great book?" Hope said teasingly, standing laughing at his side.

"'The History of Modern Architecture?' I have decided to defer its completion, until—until—" the bridegroom hesitated; "until, you are so familiar with local Boston architecture, that you can aid me in the completion of that great and long-needed work."

It is a matter of regret to chronicle that the life achievement of Mr. John Wayne Otis remained, to the infinite sorrow of his inquiring friends, forever in embryo, a magnificent fragment, a mere torso, and the eyes of his beautiful wife never rested upon the concluding pages of a work lost to the world by her own sweet perturbations. And yet, Jack Otis never regretted the lost laurels of literature, as he demurely sported the myrtle of love!

A fierce-eyed man paced the silent halls of his bachelor eyrie on Kearney Street, in far-away San Francisco, burning his heart out in impatient ejaculations. It was the still defiant Mr. Frederick Wyman. He was attended only by the mute old accountant, Brown, and his astonished young secretary, Hopkins, for the man seemed to be breaking up with ominous swiftness.

Mr. Horace Wilder, in vain, demanded intelligent "Board orders." "I can do nothing now, Wyman, unless you direct me," sternly said the broker to his chief.

"What can I tell you?" roared Wyman, in despair. "The mine is shut down. Only the accountant, McManus, my foreman, the watchman, and the official keeper are there, now. There is no news for the market. Pending this patent contest and the trial of this blackmail suit, let the stock go where it will, no sales now, will hold."

And so, the securities of the priceless "Lone Star" stood at a mere nominal figure, no one daring to buy or sell heavily.

The London expert had long since gone back to "perfide Albion," and the "Lone Star" deal was long since publicly abandoned. "The mine had been withdrawn from the London market." Such, was the official statement of record.

Wyman raged vainly at heart. His thieving hands were now tied. He counseled with none save the prominent lawyers to whom he had given a golden largesse of gigantic dimensions.

"If I can hear from Morani before Buford arrives, I may know at last how to act!" he fiercely growled. The darkest forebodings filled his heart, for even Miss Minnie Buford had ceased to write to him, the bright imaginings of her heart. Here was a new danger—the swamping of his social ambitions!

It lacked but five days of the hearing when he received General Buford's anxiously awaited telegram from Truckee, "Meet me at my own house this evening."

"Where the mischief can Milly Hammond be lingering?" muttered Wyman. "She might at least give me the history of the London happenings."

Alas! he knew not that by a singlular deference to "local opinion," Mrs. Hammond, the velvet-eyed, lingered artfully two weeks later in New York, than the robust, enamored capitalist of Nob Hill. And, she was already selecting little articles to further adorn the "haven of rest" for the disgusted and overwearied General. He craved that rest!

"Marry my one daughter to that rash fool? Never!" roared out the old financier, who only respected success. "A man who drags my own name in the London mire, is

too great a fool ever to enter my family. I will let that engagement just break itself," he added, with two or three good, solid oaths, as anchors to the forcible remark.

Wyman's busy detectives had failed to even locate Counselor Strong. None of them saw a watchful man, in extremely opaque blue eye-shades, busied sorting letters in the mail car, all the way from New York to Reno.

By a strange accident, Inspector Stanton met this very postal clerk at Reno, and they were snugly ensconced at Willow Creek station, on the evening when Buford and Wyman met in the irate General's library on Nob Hill.

When Stanton saw the photographed picture which Hope Devereux had given over to the London bank, he quietly said, "That's the murdered man, Robert Devereux. Give it to me!" And, before they walked out to find the lonely grave in the meadows, all the "old-timers" at "Willow Cross Roads," had unhesitatingly recognized it.

"This puts the whole matter beyond the last doubt," said Counselor Strong, as they plunged along through the wet grass, guided by the loyal teamster, who had in his boyish way, loved the poor invalid.

"I wonder what Wyman will do now," mused the lawyer, aloud.

"I will tell you! He will kill you himself, if he gets a chance," earnestly replied Stanton. "When he sees your hand in this affair, he will be a dangerous man,"

"He'll have to be pretty quick about it then, to escape the detectives," grimly said Strong. "I will have warrants soon drawn to arrest him for forgery and perjury, if he dares to come to Virginia City to contest the case. As for my own 'down-sittings and my up-risings,' I am not unmindful of the chances." The stern lawyer flashed out a pair of Colt's police revolvers with a most remarkable

dexterity. "I would kill that man as soon as I would shoot a dog," remarked Strong, calmly. "Let him now, beware. The days of hired murder are past. He might be only a victim!"

"There's something else behind this, than mere money," mused Stanton, thinking of this deadly hatred, as the three men walked home under the stars.

Waldo Strong had at last found his dead witness. With prophetic care, he posted a secret watch on the grave of Devereux until future orders.

"I wonder if there was ever a woman in the case!" mused the inspector, for he strangely reflected that his legal friend had been strangely mute as to the personality of "Miss Devereux of the Mariquita."

"Who the devil is she anyway?" wondered Stanton; for, Miss Devereux remained a myth to even him, so far.

Before Frederick Wyman climbed the tortuous plaisance drive to the lofty summit of Nob Hill on this battle night, he had received a cablegram from Antoine Morani at London, which told him that General Buford was his Blucher in the last struggle of his life.

The valet himself was startled, and, for the first time, began to doubt the permanence of his functions near the person of that "glass of fashion and mould of form," Frederick Wyman, Esq., and as he wrote out his cable dispatch in good round English, he vigorously damned the departed Vinnie Hinton. "This whole business is that sleek she-devil's work" he swore. "The next good place I get, I hope will be with a woman-hater. It is always a woman who kicks the pot of gold over! By God! what a sex;" and then Tony smiled. "There are, after all, a good many chances, around these fascinating little woman affairs to pick up an honest dollar. They move the world along with a jump, these women, after all," he relentingly said.

But, he wrote and telegraphed in Wyman's own cipher:

"They must know all now. Hooper made a full confession, before his hearing. Strong has sailed for America. Must be now near you. Vinnie gone to continent. Too late to do anything here. Some treachery on foot towards you. Telegraph me funds. Will come home. Singer still here."

"Who the devil can be always pushing this thing at me," cried the now half-crazed villain. "Strong must have been sent out there by the banks to promise Hooper their help if he would restore some of the money." And so, he cursed the day when he sent his ill-judged anonymous denunciation on to London. For, the local press had also noised abroad with true western pride, the connection of the departed "Jim the Penman," with the superbly executed forgeries which had waked up sleepy London.

It was clear that the gigantic profits of their cool swindler had been safely harvested on the continent. "They may now even make terms with him, and, at any rate, he has struck back at me like a rattlesnake. It was my ruin."

"Vinnie, Vinnie Hinton," he apostrophized, as the suggestive beauty of the vanished goddess glowed richly, gloating there above him, meeting the glance of his wild eyes. "She has simply cleared out. That's all! She had no hand in this."

He vaguely called back his needless row with the insolent and half drunken Hooper in these very rooms. "Force is wrong," he cried. "It was a gross mistake," he gloomily said. "Force is always a final mistake! I ought to have just slipped a few grains of morphine in his whisky, that night, and then, paid the coroner five thousand dollars for a heart disease certificate."

"Yes, I have been a fool, and now—now, I have to buy

my way out. I have but one hope left now. That is to have General Buford to 'square' the Judge!

"A hundred thousand for the Judge to throw the two cases out of court. Fifty thousand to the Land Register, too. I must stop them both off now, in the bud. Buford can easily fool the departments at Washington later! But, how much goes to him?"

When Mr. Frederick Wyman entered General Hiram Buford's library, he was ready to guarantee to him one-half of the debated interest for successfully quashing the two clouds in his hard-won title. "It's now a case of life and death," snarled Wyman. With his hand on the door of a Nob Hill mansion for the first time in his life, he was yet, most unhappy. His eyes rested on all the storied splendors of this dream of luxury.

"I must have the girl, too!" he muttered. "She is the sine qua non. She will bring the money all back, and more, too. Yes, it's a safe speculation." And so, "the nobleman of Nature" ventured boldly into the presence of the fiery-faced Jephthah, whose sprightly heiress he would fain like to take to his own innocent bosom.

A royal wooer!

The first greeting bitterly undeceived him, for, when the disturbed wooer wrapped her name in his "more rawer breath," General Hiram coldly remarked:

"Let us not speak now of my daughter, sir! We will consider that little matter at an end, at least, for, the present. I wish to know how you can repair the trouble and damage, as well as shame of your blundering operations, in so far as they relate to me.

"I have been made a damned fool of, in London, sir, and by you, by your headlong stupidity."

Wyman took his cue at once. He was desperate.

"You think so? Now, I came here to talk business, to

show you how you would be, at once, more than recouped in every way; how you would get your own money and time back in a royal profit, and, we would wind up with the mine clear, and you, a clean half a million to the good." Wyman gazed fiercely at the pompous old man, who weakened before the young speculator's resolute attitude.

"Now, you begin to talk like a man! Sit down and tell me how you can do it," said the mollified Buford, holding out his hand in a rough welcome. He rang for brandy and cigars and then said, "Johnson, I am at home to no one!"

Frederick Wyman well plied his powers of persuasion. He was dealing the greatest game of his life. His stolen fortune and the heiress, hung on the cards.

One hour later the General was in a joyous mood. The entente cordiale was restored. The brandy bottle too, was half empty. The oil of gladness!

"It's a good scheme, Wyman, a good scheme," merrily said Buford, "I will take you up there on my own private car as far as Truckee. We will be able to confer alone. I will telegraph to the judge to meet me at Carson. You can come down in the regular train and be ready to go up with your own lawyers for the trial. You must show a bold front," he mused.

"No, you had better stay down here," he said later, "I will telegraph you when to come up, and then meet me at Auburn, as if by accident."

The great man waved Wyman a most friendly adieu, with his burning cigar, at the great portal of his palace.

He whispered at parting, "Of course, if this goes through all right, the *other little private matter* can be moved on, later."

For, General Hiram Buford believed in his own heart, that "circumstances altered cases."

"It will alter these two cases, unless the judge has

changed very much since I met him last," said General Buford, as he took his copious sleeping draught. "At any rate, I must take no risk, a man of my position," and then, he laid a very contented head upon his downy pillow; for, Mrs. Milly Hammond was on her way to these balmy western shores to which her beauty would lend a new light, a very grateful and pleasing light, to the enraptured general, for that light, spoke of "the well-merited repose" he looked for, in the future enjoyment of her "intellectual companionship."

There were friendly spirits, too, in the air, who ministered that night to Wyman's repose. "If I only had Vinnie here, now," he murmured, and then, drifted away on a sea of hopeful dreams.

It was the fate of General Hiram Buford, two days later, to receive a most clear exposition of the law of descent, and several other matters germane to the contest over the "Lone Star" mine, from the eminent judge who was soon to hear in court the matter of the Devereux estate. The two men sat én petite comitè at a dinner worthy of a mountain Lucullus. The privacy of the place, the excellence of the Burgundy and the warm friendship of the two men, justified the coy judge in his lucid explanation of the wary refusal of what General Buford effectively termed, "a good chunk of boodle."

"Hiram," said the judge, with a fearful look at the doors and windows, "I would like to help you, and to help myself. I am always willing to do a favor. I cannot, here! First, there is a regular avalanche of Devereux reminiscences now flooding the excited town. 'Trifles light as air,' but, the straws all unfortunately point one way! Your friend, Wyman is in for it. Bob Haley is a great power on the Comstock. He has roused up the whole Miners' Union, and, they now swear vengeance for the men whom they be-

lieve Wyman burned in the mine to break the stock down to nothing. He is a cool chap, this Wyman, he may have done that trick. Now, only a little one-horse firm of young attorneys have so far, appeared in the case. Waldo Strong, though, has just been entered as the attorney of record, and he has as counsel, Henry Edgerly, the greatest speaker now alive, at our bar. There is no law to fight over in this! Strong has only put him in to lash the miners up to madness with a ringing speech. I would be afraid of my own life if I dallied with justice.

"Andy Bowen is walking the streets too, heavily armed! He is a pretty fair character for a rough miner. He swears that Fred Wyman has ruined him, and that he will kill him on sight. Now, that's lex talonis. You see, Hiram," aid the judge, "as Allan Thurman remarked once, 'Law is simply common sense, and you cannot refine it.' Here is the whole thing, in a nutshell: Wyman *never* owned this three-quarters of the mine, the 'Lone Star,' or the 'Mariquita.' His whole honest holding, one-quarter, was really, a gift from poor Devereux. Now, he sets up a transfer by this same man Devereux to the other three-quarters. The facts prove Devereux to have been dead fully six months, before that deed was made. No matter who owns that interest, Wyman does not! In possession of the mine, he was really only a trustee for the real owners. He is accountable to them for all back rents and profits. For the setting up of the false deed, the forgery and subsequent perjury, he is accountable to the State.

"Now, his able lawyers cannot force Waldo Strong to show his hand. He merely proves that a certain woman child is the only legal heiress of the dead man. If he should fail to get letters for her, the public administrator then comes in, but, Wyman is nowhere. His incorporation, also, is void, and, he can get no United States patent.

The stock now out, is worthless. Any holder can sue the directors for the value of all his bonafide purchases. So, as Strong can go either quickly or slowly, he is the absolute master! He can push the patent contest, and dally with the other suit if he wishes. He may also, cut across lots, and simply begin criminal proceedings against Wyman. The hearing is soon coming on. I could delay it a little, say twenty days, as a personal favor to you. Let Wyman's lawyer ask for it. I am not speaking ex cathedra, but, my advice to Wyman is, either to compromise, or skip."

The Judge washed down this little lecture with a huge beaker of Burgundy. As he lit a Henry Clay, he smiled benignly at Buford, "You see, my dear old boy, if there was any shadow of a contest, I could lean your way and then, decide in your interest no matter how barefaced, but, Great Heavens, it decides itself. If I could get a chance to weigh the weight of evidence, I could also decide for you, and your own people have interest enough to sustain me, in the final appeal. But, Wyman has no shadow of claim save the foolish and clumsy trick.

"If he had simply held on as partner he would have had a far better showing, for possession lapses; and limitations, might have helped him. His own conduct has damned him. He does not come into court with clean hands. The town is now full of people waiting here for the first hearing. If this Devereux child does not get this property, every big claim north and south will then pitch in, and set up a shadow title to it. The 'swearing element' is all here, waiting a rich harvest. My advice to you is to quietly drop this fellow Wyman, for he will hurt even you in public esteem. He is too heavy a load to drag."

"But, he owes me a lot of money. I want to get squarely out of his clutches. He has tied me up, too, in the London foolery." Buford was indignant.

"Ah! That's another thing," the oily Judge remarked. "You then go back, and force Wyman at once, to a settlement. Tell him I told you for him to apply for twenty days. I'll give it! Put on all your thumbscrews, and when you are 'clear out,' then telegraph me, in your own name. Just say, 'All right.' So, you will be safe. Let him then, go to the devil."

"I am a thousand times obliged to you," said Buford, as the two cunning men parted. The General whispered, "I'll stick five thousand dollars on the settlement for you. I'll send to you a certificate of deposit, 'X. Y. Z,' at our bank. You can drop in and dine with me, next time you're in town, and I'll then cash it."

The Judge's eyes twinkled gratefully. "Hiram," he murmured, "Don't make any mistake. Wyman is a dead man if he ever shows up here. Tell him that! Tell him I said so! I don't wish to see a bloody riot here. Let him take the best terms he can. Perhaps you can make a deal on him."

General Hiram Buford slept happily in his private car as he rolled merrily along back to San Francisco. He had already telegraphed to Wyman, "Partly successful. Wait for me in the city; coming down."

"That will keep him there," mused the drowsy General. "I'll telegraph to Pauline to have Minnie now dismiss him finally. There's an English fellow hanging round her. A good match too! When I have been well paid for all my time and losses, he can go to ——." The rest of this soliloquy was lost in a profound snore due to a mixture of very good law and, much better Burgundy.

A wise man in Israel was this "prominent citizen" who dreamed of Mrs. Milly Hammond's cosy retreat for his over-taxed brain, wearied in doing good.

Wyman listened to the whole statement of the case in

Virginia City, as artfully presented by General Buford on his return. The evening was not far advanced when the excited conspirator dispatched to his attorneys in Nevada at once, to ask the delay of twenty days "on the ground of his own severe illness."

"You can easily go to bed, and then, send up a doctor's certificate," practically said the General, "and I'll come down to your office to-morrow and see how we stand."

"A very fair settlement," remarked General Buford next day, when Frederick Wyman had drawn very heavily upon his hidden cash reserve. "You see the judge will be down here next week, and, your lawyers have a chance to see him now. I will, of course, advise with you, Wyman," said Buford, as he made a mental note to cash Wyman's heavy check at once. "I will see the Anglo bank and tell them you have acted uprightly in every way, with me. That is all I can do." The great man beamed upon his prospective son-in-law.

"Yes, General, it will help me if you will do so," gratefully replied Wyman. "My chief counsel will be here to-night, and I will come in and see you."

"Certainly, certainly, always glad," murmured the General, in his very grandest manner. "But, my boy, make a judicious compromise. Remember, always remember, I tell you, the Judge, however well disposed, is tied down by fact and statute."

"I shall try a compromise," said Wyman with already clouded brow. "But, this fellow Strong hates me. Where he is hiding his pauper heiress, I cannot say. He has been seen at Virginia City lately, but he has no woman with him."

"I really think, Wyman," said Buford, "that Strong drifted into the case through his hunting up the old Hooper frauds. You will find out yet, it is some one else

who has dug up the alleged heiress. You have no idea who she is?"

"Not in the slightest," growled Wyman. "You see we cannot call on them. They put their own proof into the court. It's a blind lead, and so, the fight comes "butt end on." We are right in the thick of it, before we know where we are. I would not like to be left to this Waldo Strong's tender mercies. I hurt him once sorely in a stock deal," Wyman slowly said, "and, we were also a bit mixed up in a little woman business. That is, I fear, I ran against his hidden plans, in that regard."

Coming shadows upon the soul of Richard!

"Ah!" ejaculated Buford, "I see the veiled animus then! But, Good God! Wyman!" roared Buford, "Strong is no lady-killer. He is about as stylish as the outside of one of his law books. Just about!"

"Women do take damned strange fancies into their heads, sometimes," remarked Mr. Frederick Wyman, energetically, as he "divided the luck," in a parting drink with Buford.

"Right you are!" said the rotund General, as he buttoned his Prince Albert over the liberal check. "They do, at times, play the very devil. Do you know, Wyman," said the angry capitalist, "I have even had trouble with them, myself! And, yet," he sighed, "I don't see any way to avoid it, unless you let them alone, altogether. They are a gay and festive lot!"

With which invincible aphorism, the man who was about to call on Mrs. Milly Hammond, and "inspect the haven of rest," fled forth after the fashion of a dove from the Ark, on troubled waters.

Mr. Wyman spent the next day closeted with Paul Cadwallader, his leading counsel. The gray old advocate smoked vigorously with his hat jammed over his eyes, as

Wyman blundered along, from one semi-admission to another. His story was a lame one in every leg, and, alas! it had more legs than the law allows.

The round, full, moon face of the lawyer became as grave as a Catholic priest's most austere visage. When he at last broke in, his voice was harsh and unsympathetic. It was the verdict of a mental giant. "See here, Wyman! You are like all my other clients. You tell me half truths, at the wrong time, and then, pay me to pull you out of the holes which you dig for yourselves. Why, damn it, man! You've fought this fellow, Strong. He has the age on you. He is of the 'inner temple.' You are only a nervy speculator. When he commenced to dog you, you should have nailed him, with a good bribe, as a legal retainer. Taken him in! He would have then, have smothered the whole thing. Bought up this little freckle-faced pauper, who has been probably pulled out of some back alley, and, you and he, would have been then, joint owners of a good thing. 'Particeps criminis,' That is to say, general partners," said the cool old counselor.

"Yes, but, there was a woman in the case," urged Wyman.

The lawyer snorted in disdain.

"Bother the woman!" roared Cadwallader. "You should have let him have had her. For all you know, he would have gladly made you a present of her, in six months. 'Jam satis.' Enough of a good thing! Women! Why the very woods are full of them out here! But, you don't find a mine like the 'Lone Star,' every day.

"Now, you tell me to make a compromise for you. They will now cut and carve deeply, my boy, at the best, where they would only have nibbled before! But, it's after all yours to decide.

"I tell you plainly, in law, I can do nothing for you. It's not your mine anyway, that is, the three-quarters, and, it never was. What shall I do?"

"See what you can do with the Strong party," sullenly growled Wyman. "Either ask their terms, or offer them," he hesitated.

"How much?" said Paul Cadwallader, his little round gray eyes now fixed on the hesitating man.

"Half," roughly said Wyman, as he rose wearied and at last brought to bay. His very mind was giving away. His nerve had deserted him.

"All right," coolly said his wary counsel. "I'll let you know as soon as I hear from Strong. He is in the city now. But, if it is no go then, I warn you! I won't go back to Virginia City unless you go with us, and, it is my duty to tell you there is a good deal of local feeling up there against you. They are a very rough lot in Nevada!"

"Can't you do anything with the judge?" ventured Wyman.

Paul Cadwallader wheeled on him like a flash. "He is nailed down to the cross. He can't squirm! No thoroughfare! No, my boy. This case unfortunately decides itself! It all hangs on the document, and, you know, the very execution of that document by Devereux was an impossibility. So, where's your title?"

"See what you can do!" cried Wyman, as he rushed out of the office, for the lawyer's eyes were filled with a cold scorn, which he could not disguise.

"Bah!" said Cadwallader as he took up "Holman on Deeds." "A thief should never be a fool. What a gang of upstart scrubs, and yet, they are my clients."

It was three days before the answer of the attorneys for the claimant to the Devereux estate was formally received. Mr. Waldo Strong, a stickler for professional etiquette,

cabled the proposition on to London, where Miss Gladys Lyndon was now on the eve of her last "appearance on any stage." The life partners were nestling in their love hallowed masquerade frolic, and happier than the full throated birds of spring.

"I will do as you advise, Wayne," the lady of the Mariquita remarked. "I do not feel like disregarding Mr. Strong's intimation. You see, he has said, 'Half offered of the whole property, immediate possession and past accounting. I, still, advise pushing the proceedings. No honest connection with Wyman possible. He may be in other trouble soon. If you order me to push the suit, then come on here at once. No danger. Cable your decision. Time presses.'"

"What shall I telegraph, Lady Mine," replied her husband. "It is your sadly won birthright. I agree, of course, with Strong's views, and your own decision, darling, shall end it. You know his vile character in the past. You would not care to be his partner."

"God forbid!" the gentle singer said, "and I feel, too, that I should make a great compensation, all that I can, to the families of the men so strangely sacrificed in my mine, for, it seems," shé brightly said, lifting her happy eyes to her husband's, "that my poor dead father did not toil in vain! I could kiss the very threshold of the cabin door out of which he passed to die for us." The fair head was bowed, but the tears were only from the shadowy clouds of other years. And, she was quickly strained to a loving breast.

"Then, Hope, my darling," said Jack Otis, "your voice is heard, for the last time to-night, by your collective admirers, the dear old solid 'British public.' I will telegraph, 'Go ahead with the suit, we come at once.'."

The gentle woman hesitated to say the word, but she bowed her stately head in assent.

It was loosening the furies!

"I shall give the extra share to the poor orphans; those who may tread a far stonier path than the one which has brought you to my side."

There was a grave crisis now approaching in far away San Francisco!

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Wyman, it is a fight to the bitter end!" said Paul Cadwallader to his hastily summoned client. Wyman started and then, noticed the formality which is assumed at weddings, duels, funerals, public dinners and, all other "festive occasions." The word "Mr." indicated a last formal stage of the proceedings! "Now, we have the law in our hands and the books. You alone are responsible for the facts. The property in debate is also yours. Put your own best foot now foremost! You must have found out some friendly witnesses. You have plenty of money. We have eight or ten days yet. Come in to-morrow with all your papers and data. We'll make you the very best fight we can," cheerfully said the astute counselor. "But, you must go up there with us! Without you, it is Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark." Paul Cadwallader's eyes did not lie.

"Oh, certainly, certainly!" remarked Wyman, who rose and left the office, in a dazed sort of way.

As he stepped out of the door, he noticed the changed air of the passers-by, his very street acquaintances seemed to him, to harbor only hostile glances, and the glare of the sun itself looked cold and faded. The afternoon wind too, smote him coldly. "Damn the Mariquita mine! I wish I had never heard of it," he muttered, as he ran against his secretary, Hopkins, whose face was very anxious.

"I was just coming for you, sir," said the keen-eyed clerk, who diagnosed his master as suffering "from a mind diseased." "Tony is here, came right from the train, and wants to see you, at once. He did not even dare to

come down here." For, all but Wyman knew that his harem fortress was watched day and night, by strange detectives now.

"All right," said Wyman briefly. "I'll come up." And he shivered slightly for the very wind seemed to bring back the blasts, howling down the gloomy defiles of blood-haunted Grizzly Cañon. He slipped into the side door of a great saloon, and stepping into a private room ordered a "bonanza" cocktail.

"Put a little absinthe into it, Francois," he murmured, as he gave the man a half dollar. The hum of voices on the other side of a thin partition arrested his attention.

"They say," a rough voice remarked, "that this damned scoundrel, Wyman, is pretty near to the end of his rope. I will always believe he murdered those men in the 'Lone Star.' He's capable of anything!"

The listener's very blood froze in terror!

"If he did, hanging is far too good for him," cried a rude chorus, as glasses loudly clinked and Francois was stunned and astonished, as his tray flew out of his hands, for, with a white face, Frederick Wyman rushed out of his place of rest.

"That man looks sick," cried the frightened Frenchman, as he picked up the shattered glasses.

Away up the street, madly sped the "nobleman of Nature," and he clashed the door of his den loudly behind him, as he threw off his coat and tossed away hat and stick.

"None of that foolishness. Tell me your London news. Sit down!" ordered Wyman, as Antoine Morani sprang to aid his excited master.

"Well, what is it? out with it!" the desperate man roughly cried.

"I found out, sir, that this forger fellow, Hooper, has confessed all about some papers at Truckee. The deposi-

tion was copied, and, an extra certified original kept at Newgate prison. I bribed the lawyer's clerk, and so, got a copy of that copy. Here it is, sealed up, just as he gave it to me."

Wyman reached out his trembling hand and took it without a word.

"Hooper has already been found guilty of one of the London forgeries and started off for the penal colonies. Vinnie is clean gone, too."

The man stopped, and then, cast down his eyes.

"Anything else? Speak, speak out, man!" roared Wyman, in a tone which admitted of no denial.

"Only this, I did not know if I should, but, last——" While the valet hesitated, Wyman snatched a blue-penciled paper from his hand. It was a London Court and Society Journal.

His eyes swam as he read the marked article:

"Marriage in High Life."

"We understand that a marriage has been arranged between Claude Cecil, fourth Lord Templeton, of the Oaks, Berkshire, and Major of Her Majesty's "Buffs," with Miss Minerva, only daughter of General Hiram Buford of California, the great millionaire, whose family are at present residing in their splendid London mansion, recently purchased from Lord Mossback, and lately refitted for the use of the new owner. The wedding will occur immediately on the return of General Buford from California, whither he has been called, temporarily, by his vast local interests."

"The damned scoundrel! I see it all. He sold me out, and has fooled me all the while," yelled Wyman, forgetting the presence of the open-eyed Morani. He gloomily buried his head in his hand.

"Shall I get you anything, sir?" hazarded the frightened servant.

"Yes, give me a good stiff drink, and get out of here! Wait in your room till I ring for you. Don't go away."

"Will you have dinner, sir? It's getting very late," inquired Tony, as he saw the wolfish way in which his master swallowed the fiery brandy. The shades of night were deepening gloomily around.

"No, I want to sleep. Don't wake me if I fall asleep," and Wyman threw himself, dressed, on his couch.

The hours crawled on in silence, a brooding silence! Once or twice in the early evening, the valet stole in and gazed anxiously at the sleeping man. "I never saw him look that way before," he said, filled with an unknown fear. The lamp was glimmering low in the superb apartment, and, over the sleeping man, the beauty of Vinnie Hinton floating aloft, was hovering, an unearthly vision of voluptuous loveliness, "with the lamplight gloating o'er." Morani stilled his heart, as he gazed on the wonderful form, dreaming above, in its sea-born beauty, the softly-melting depths of the half-crying eyes, and the blooming face where a long-fled innocence seemed to linger still, on the rosy, dewy lips; to mock at time and vice! There, around him, were the memorials of her witching presence, the very chair she had made her throne in the halcyon days of life and love.

"She has been his ruin. It is her work!" the Frenchman sighed, for, even her vacant chair was a menace of coming woe to him. "She made Hooper peach on him, and, he is in danger now."

Mr. Antoine Morani resolved himself at once into a "Committee of Ways and Means" as to a new place! "In the near future," he saw storms descending upon the lordly mushroom house of Wyman. "A nice little hotel

in Paris," he thought of, as a final refuge, and the bright-eyed, little soubrette he had left in London, figured there as the "dame du comptoir."

His noddings were interrupted by a sharp ring at the front door, and there in the gloom of the night, a diminutive imp of darkness quickly shoved in a yellow telegraph envelope and a dirty paper book.

"Double special. Answer back. Delivery only! Say, Tony," the boy leered as he rolled his cigarette, "There's no monkeying with that! There was five dollars came down with it, for instant delivery. Get the old man to sign it himself, that's my orders from the office!"

With a sinking heart, the valet entered the sleeping room and roused Wyman, who started up with an oath. "I had to get your own signature, sir. It's specially important!" Frederick Wyman read it, and then, threw himself back on the couch, his staring eyes fixed on the pictured beauties of the one woman who had ruled his heart with her glowing charms. He grasped the pencil and scratched his name!

Morani stole on tip-toe out of the room. He dared not turn his head again, for something in Wyman's face awed him. Dropping the heavy double curtain, he cast a glance at him lying there, under the spell of the half crying eyes, and then, went down to the side door. He was frightened at Wyman's face.

He carefully locked the door after the boy had gone away. He then, closed all the doors between his own rooms and Wyman's apartment. "Is he going to skip?" mused the valet. "I'll watch him!" He gave up his worries and sat down to a neat little supper he had laid privately away, for his long night-watch. "If he wants me, he will ring for me," thought Tony, "but, I never saw him in such a humor. Something must be wrong at the mine."

As he lifted his glass to pour a libation to the girl in London, he dropped it with a crash, for, a muffled explosion sounded upon his ears. The shock of a heavy fall followed, and there was no settled purpose in the near frantic rush of the frightened valet into his master's room. There, upon the floor, with his hands clutching the tufted Persian carpet and a smoking pistol at his side, lay the defeated man who had played his last card in life! His eyes were still staring upwards, as he lay there with his arms wildly outspread in his crashing fall, but, a dark pool of blood welled around his stiffening form. He had died gazing at the mocking face smiling down over him!

In fright, the valet turned up the light, and its glare showed him above, great, red blotches staining the fair face of the woman's form hovering above, in an unearthly mocking beauty, and on that ivory bosom where the dead man's lips had so often pressed burning love kisses, was a red stain of the last life-drops throbbing in Wyman's heart. A horrible silence reigned in the room of the dead!

Morani's cunning eyes gleamed. The house was all silent. He stooped and carefully picked up the opened telegram lying there by the side of the corpse. It was spattered with gore. But, the Frenchman read it eagerly. It was signed McManus. Its words were clear:

"Extradition proceedings begun here for forgery and perjury. Strong is here. Warrants already issued. Officers leave to-night. See your lawyers."

"Ah!" the valet muttered, as he dropped the blood-stained paper. "I have but little time!" With the deftness of old time practice, he moved around the rooms busied in a ghoul's quest for five minutes. The double curtains and the solid white enameled shutters which had

hidden so much stray loveliness in the old days from curious eyes, now shut off the street. Well he knew that all the other lodgers in that seraglio block were now busied with deeds without a name! There was a composed gravity on his face as he sped out and first stopped a moment at a blackened door near by, where a few whispered words enabled him to quickly pass in a bundle. "I got twenty thousand francs, anyway," he exulted. "I'll get more yet!" But, his face was very solemn as he accosted Officer Duffy in the act of emerging with all the due ceremony of unconscious innocence, from a corner saloon.

"Come up stairs, Duffy, come quickly!" said the servant impressively. "My master has just shot himself, and I fear that he is dead. I want you, and a doctor!"

"Howly God! That's news," cried Duffy, as he sprang up the stairs.

It was too true! "Well, he had the nerve," muttered Duffy as he lifted the palsied right arm, which fell back again with a dull sound. "The ball has gone clear through his head." And so in the silent agony of defeat and the darkness of shame, unloved and unregretted, Frederick Wyman sought the echoless shore.

It was a month later when the Lady of the Mariquita walked down through the bleak gateway of Grizzly Cañon, where Steven Berard had once ridden to his death. Her husband strode along in silence at her side. It was a pilgrimage of tender love; for, there were now no shadows on the pathway of that life of love that stretched before her, so bright and fair.

The death of the dark survivor of the unhappy partnership had left her free to assume, unchallenged, the owner-

ship of the property for which, her faithful father had toiled in poverty and want.

Waldo Strong had consented to assume the general management of her vast estate, while Captain Bob Haley had already returned to break into the now easily located treasures of the "Mariquita."

The first legal act of the happy heiress was to restore the name once hallowed by a father's loving hopes.

There were sad duties resting upon the lawyer, which Otis confided to his sympathy and judgment; for, side by side, the long parted parents of the Lady Bountiful of the "Mariquita" were to rest, in the peaceful shadows of Lone Mountain, far away by the sounding sea. And already, the widows and orphans of the sacrificed miners blessed the name of the tender-eyed young wife.

"There is nothing more to keep us here now, Hope," earnestly pleaded her husband. "I wish you to go away with me, far out over the western seas, till we have followed the sun's track around the world. We have much to say to each other. There is a new life stretching out before you. For a time, I wish to bring you to forget that you were once 'Miss Devereux of the Mariquita.' You must be mine alone! Let the gray past sit veiled in its palmer's robes by the milestones of life which we have already passed. I wish to take you far away, my darling, where these voices of the olden days do not echo."

Her face was, too, shaded with the sorrows of the old time; those memories of the struggles for the buried treasures had overburdened her gentle soul.

It was on the eve of their departure that they stepped over the threshold of the ruined cabin, where Robert Devereux had penned those now faded letters of love, which she had kissed so often in grateful tenderness. The letters which spoke of a father's toil for a loving wife and

his helpless child. The bright spring still flashed out in diamond drops there, and trickled away merrily down the lonely cañon.

Otis left her there alone for a time, her dainty foot hallowing the old cabin, as her lips moved in words of a love awakened after many long years. She came forth at last, with a strange light on her loving face. Their eyes met as they stood there, under the red light of the dying day. It transfigured the face of the fair young wife as the gazed around the lonely scene. The dim mountains rose far beyond to the quiet sunset skies. Shadows crept up the cañon softly, and the warring owl sounded his lonely note. The darkening shades had no terrors for her as they threw a soft pall of light around the scarped walls of Grizzly Cañon, for the man she loved, was tenderly watching at her side.

She smiled through her tears as she broke off a sprig from the tall pine growing beside that humble cabin, which was to her a place of holy memories. The rude hut which had sheltered the dear dead heart which had throbbed there, in love for his little Hope.

"God bless his honored memory, after many years, the harvest of his love is reaped. God be with them both." She turned the beautiful wistful eyes to the lover of her heart.

"I am so happy in these days," said Hope, "for, even if this fortune comes to me, after many years of sorrow, you share it with me, and it is a double happiness, for it comes to us both, as one in heart, one in love's mystery, never to be parted."

And then she bent her shining eyes upon him with a look so full of promise for that future far beyond the sunset shadows, that he simply raised her little hand and kissed it in silence.

"May God bless you, my own darling," softly said the man, who could not trust himself to break the brooding spell of her loving memories.

And so, hand in hand, they wandered up the glen.

THE END.

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